Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity

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VOLUME 13

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Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity

Edited by

Harold Tarrant, Danielle A. Layne,
Dirk Baltzly and François Renaud

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Cover illustration: Group IX/SUW, No. 1: The Swan, No. 1, by Hilma af Klint. Photo by Albin Dahlström, courtesy of Moderna Museet-Stockholm. The image was chosen by the volume editors for the swan as a symbol of Plato's elusive nature, see chapter 9. The painting also suggests the Platonic theme of reflections, while white and black swans symbolize cooperation across the hemispheres.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Tarrant, Harold, editor.
Title: Brill's companion to the reception of Plato in antiquity / edited by Harold Tarrant, University of Newcastle Australia, Danielle A. Layne, Gonzaga University, Dirk Baltzly, University of Tasmania and Monash University, and François Renaud, Universite de Moncton.
Description: Boston : Brill, 2018. | Series: Brill's companions to classical reception, ISSN 2213-1426 ; volume 13 | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017041340 | ISBN 9789004270695 (hardback : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Plato.
Classification: LCC B395 .B7535 2017 | DDC 184–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017041340

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 2213-1426
ISBN 978-90-04-27069-5 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-35538-5 (e-book)

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This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

Contents

Acknowledgements IX
Abbreviations X
Notes on Contributors XVI

Introduction 1

PART I
Early Developments in Reception

Introduction: The Old Academy to Cicero 10

1 **Speusippus and Xenocrates on the Pursuit and Ends of Philosophy** 29
Phillip Sidney Horky

2 **The Influence of the Platonic Dialogues on Stoic Ethics from Zeno to Panaetius of Rhodes** 46
Francesca Alesse

3 **Plato and the Freedom of the New Academy** 58
Charles E. Snyder

4 **Return to Plato and Transition to Middle Platonism in Cicero** 72
François Renaud

PART II
Early Imperial Reception of Plato

Introduction: Early Imperial Reception of Plato 92

5 **From Fringe Reading to Core Curriculum: Commentary, Introduction and Doctrinal Summary** 101
Harold Tarrant

6 **Philo of Alexandria** 115
Sami Yli-Karjanmaa

7 **Plutarch of Chaeronea and the Anonymous Commentator on the *Theaetetus*** 130
Mauro Bonazzi

8 **Theon of Smyrna: Re-thinking Platonic Mathematics in Middle Platonism** 143
Federico M. Petrucci

9 **Cupid's Swan from the Academy (*De Plat.* 1.1, 183): Apuleius' Reception of Plato** 156
Geert Roskam

10 **Alcinous' Reception of Plato** 171
Carl S. O'Brien

11 **Numenius: Portrait of a Platonicus** 183
Polymnia Athanassiadi

12 **Galen and Middle Platonism: The Case of the Demiurge** 206
Julius Rocca

13 **Variations of Receptions of Plato during the Second Sophistic** 223
Ryan C. Fowler

PART III
Early Christianity and Late Antique Platonism

Introduction: Early Christianity and Late Antique Platonism 252

14 **Origen to Evagrius** 271
Ilaria Ramelli

15 **Sethian Gnostic Appropriations of Plato** 292
John D. Turner

16 **Plotinus and Platonism** 316
Lloyd P. Gerson

17 **Porphyry** 336
Michael Chase

18 **The Anonymous *Commentary on the Parmenides*** 351
Dennis Clark

19 **Iamblichus, the Commentary Tradition, and the Soul** 366
John Finamore

20 **Amelius and Theodore of Asine** 381
Dirk Baltzly

21 **Plato's Political Dialogues in the Writings of Julian the Emperor** 400
Dominic J. O'Meara

22 **Plato's Women Readers** 411
Crystal Addey

23 **Calcidius** 433
Christina Hoenig

24 **Augustine's Plato** 448
Gerd Van Riel

25 **Orthodoxy and Allegory: Syrianus' Metaphysical Hermeneutics** 470
Sarah Klitenic Wear

26 **Hermias: *On Plato's Phaedrus*** 486
Harold Tarrant and *Dirk Baltzly*

27 **Proclus and the Authority of Plato** 498
Jan Opsomer

28 **Damascius the Platonic Successor: Socratic Activity and Philosophy in the 6th Century CE** 515
Sara Ahbel-Rappe

29 **The Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy** 533
Danielle A. Layne

30 **Olympiodorus of Alexandria** 555
Michael Griffin

31 **Simplicius of Cilicia: Plato's Last Interpreter** 569
Gary Gabor

Conclusion 580

Bibliography 583
General Index 639
Index Locorum 647

Acknowledgements

The Editors would like first to thank contributors for their patience and cooperation during the completion of this volume. Cooperation and collaboration are the key to the success of any composite volume with this kind of scope. Secondly, thanks to Kyriakos Demetriou for his encouragement and help. Funding has not been an issue for the actual work of editing, but it has been of major importance in equipping members of the team to undertake a project of this magnitude. Tarrant and Baltzly have since 1999 benefitted from the generous funding of the Australian Research Council under their Discovery grant scheme. One recent grant (2009–12: DP0986334, 'Academies under Stress') included Renaud also. A further grant (2012–15: DP120102425, 'Plato's Myth Voice') was led by Professor Benitez but also included Tarrant and Baltzly. Though the latter grant had different work in view, it has kept our minds focused on Platonic reception in antiquity and, in particular, facilitated Baltzly's work on Hermias. Renaud would like also to acknowledge the assistance of two three-year research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for work on Cicero and Olympiodorus, both as Platonic exegetes. One of the most helpful things to come from this funding and the sheer encouragement that it has offered is the various collaborations between members of this team, without which Tarrant would have had neither the courage not the expertise to be involved in such a scheme. Layne is in debt to the support she has received from the College of Arts and Sciences and the Philosophy Department of Gonzaga University. Of course, each of us have family, friends, and colleagues, too many to be enumerated for each of our number, who are not forgotten either. Without them none of us would have the stamina or philosophical friendships that help inspire and sustain our work. Friendship, geniality and collegiality should not be underestimated.

Abbreviations

Alcinous

Did.	*Didaskalikos*

Anonymous

Comm.	*Commentary on the Parmenides*

Anonymous

Proleg.	*Prolegomena Philosophiae Platonicae*

Anonymous

in Tht.	*in Theaetetum*

Apuleius

Apol.	*Apology*
De Plat.	*De Platone et eius Dogmate*
DDS	*De Deo Socratis*
Flor.	*Florida*

Aristotle

DA	*De Anima*
EN	*Ethica Nicomachea*
Gen. An.	*De Generatione Animalium*
Metaph.	*Metaphysica*
Phys.	*Physica*
Pol.	*Politica*
Rhet.	*Ars Rhetorica*
Top.	*Topica*

Augustine

Acad.	*Contra Academicos*
Ciu. Dei	*De civitate Dei*
Conf.	*Confessiones*
De Trin.	*De trinitate*
De uera relig.	*De uera religion*
Epist.	*Epistulae*

Calcidius

in Tim.	*Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*

Cicero

Ac.	*Academica*
De fin.	*De finibus*
De Leg.	*de Legibus*
De Nat. De.	*de Natura Deorum*
De off.	*de Officiis*
De orat.	*De Orator*
De re pub.	*de re publica*
Orat.	*Orator*
Tusc. Disp.	*Tusculanae Disputationes*

Clement

Strom.	*Stromata*

Damascius

In Phd.	*Commentary on Plato's Phaedo*
In Phlb.	*Lectures on Plato's Philebus*
PA	*Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*
PH	*Vita Isidori*

Diogenes Laertius

D.L.	*Vitae philosophorum*

Eunapius

VS	*Vitae sophistarum*

Eusebius

HE	*Historia ecclesiastica*
PE	*Praeparatio Evangelica*

Evagrius

KG	*Kephalaia Gnostica*

Galen

Aff. Dig.	*De propriorum animi cuiuslibet affectuum dignotione et curatione*
Lib. Propr.	*De libris propriis*
MM	*De methodo medendi*
PHP	*De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*
Propr. Plac.	*De propriis placitis*

QAM	*Quod animi mores corporis temperamenta sequantur*
UP	*De usu partium*

Hermias

In Phdr.	*in Platonis Phaedrum scholia*

Iamblichus

De An.	*De Anima*
De Myst.	*De mysteriis*
In Nicom.	*in Nicomachi arithmeticam introductionem*
VP	*de vita Pythagorica*

Marinus

Vit. Procl.	*Vita Procli*

Nag Hammadi Codices

NHC

Nemesius

de Nat. Hom.	*De Natura Hominis*

Orac. Chald.

CO	*Chaldaean Oracles*

Origen

C.Cant.	*Commentary on the Song of Songs*
C.Jo.	*Commentary on John*
CC	*Contra Celsum*
H.Ier.	*Homilies on Jeremiah*
Princ.	*De Principios*

Olympiodorus

In Alc.	*Commentary on the First Alcibiades*
In Gorg.	*In Platonem Gorgiam Commentaria*
In Phd.	*In Platonis Phaedonem Commentaria*

Philo

Abr.	*De Abrahamo*
Aet.	*De aeternitate mundi*

Agr.	*De agricultura*
Anim.	*De animalibus*
Cher.	*De cherubim*
Contempl.	*De vita contemplativa*
Conf.	*De confusione linguarum*
Decal.	*De Decalogo*
Det.	*Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat*
Deus	*Quod Deus sit immutabilis*
Ebr.	*De ebrietate*
Fug.	*De fuga et inventione*
Gig.	*De gigantibus*
Her.	*Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*
Leg.	*Legum allegoriae*
Migr.	*De migratione Abrahami*
Opif.	*De opificio mundi*
Plant.	*De plantatione*
PLCL	*Philo in Ten Volumes* (*and Two Supplementary Volumes*), English translation by F. H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker (and R. Marcus), 12 vols. Loeb Classical Library; London: William Heinemann (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929–1962).
Prob.	*Quod omnis probus liber sit*
Prov.	*De providentia*
QE	*Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum*
QG	*Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim*
Somn.	*De somniis*
Spec.	*De specialibus legibus*
Virt.	*De virtutibus*

Philostratus

VS	*Vitas Sophistarum*

Plato

Ap.	*Apology*
Crat.	*Cratylus*
Ep.	*Epinomis*
Euthyd.	*Euthydemus*
Grg.	*Gorgias*
Leg.	*Laws*
Parm.	*Parmenides*
Phd.	*Phaedo*

Phdr.	*Phaedrus*
Phlb.	*Philebus*
Plt.	*Statesman*
Prot.	*Protagoras*
Rep.	*Republic*
Sph.	*Sophist*
Symp.	*Symposium*
Tht.	*Theaetetus*
Tim.	*Timaeus*

Plotinus

Enn.	*Enneads*

Plutarch

Ad princ. ind.	*Ad principem ineruditum*
adv. Col.	*Adversus Colotem*
An seni	*An seni respublica gerenda sit*
An. procr.	*De animae procreatione in Timaeo*
De def. or.	*De defectu oraculorum*
De E	*De E apud Delphos*
De Is. et Os.	*De Iside et Osiride*
De prof. in virt.	*Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus*
De sera	*De sera numinis vindicta*
De Stoic. Rep.	*De Stoicorum repugnantiis*
De virt. mor.	*De virtute morali*
Max. cum phil.	*Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum*
Praec.	*Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*
Quaest. conv.	*Quaestiones conviviales*
Quaest. plat.	*Platonicae Quaestiones*
Vit. Phoc.	*Vita Phocionis*

Porphyry

Abst.	*De abstinentia*
Antr.	*De antro nympharum*
Harm.	*In Ptolemaei Harmonica*
In Cat.	*In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*
In Tim.	*In Platonis Timaeum commentariorum fragmenta*
Marc.	*Ad Marcellam*
Sent.	*Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes*
V.Plot.	*Vita Plotini*

Proclus

In Alc.	*Proclus: Commentary on the First Alcibiades*
In Crat.	*Procli Diadochi in Platonis Cratylum commentaria*
In Parm.	*Procli in Platonis Parmenidem commentaria*
In Remp.	*Procli Diadochi in Platonis rem publicam commentarii*
In Tim.	*Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*
PT	*Théologie platonicienne*

Seneca

Ep.	*Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*

Sextus Empiricus

Adv. Math.	*Adversus mathematicos*
PH	*Pyrrhonia Hypotyposes*

Simplicius

in Cat.	*In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria*
in Ench.	*In Epicteti Enchiridion*
In Phys.	*In Aristotelis Physicorum*

Stobeus

Anth.	*Anthology*
Ecl.	*Eclogues*

Theon

Expos.	*Philosophi Platonici Expositio Rerum Mathematicarum ad Legendum Platonem Utilium*

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Introduction

I Preliminaries

Despite Socrates' infamous criticism of written text in the *Phaedrus* (275a–e), Plato's enduring fame and legacy certainly pivots upon the illustrious beauty and wisdom found in the dialogues. Born early in the disastrous Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE), Plato witnessed many of his compatriots losing their lives, or like Alcibiades wasting their lives, in their quest for everlasting glory. In contrast to such pitiful pursuits of ambition, individuals like Thucydides and Plato[1] sought to be remembered by their literary pursuits, with the historian explicitly desiring his writings to be a "resource for all time".[2] Similarly, Plato suggests in the *Symposium* through the character of Diotima that there were numerous ways of attaining greatness or "immortality" (208c–209e), one of which explicitly endorsed the verse of Homer or Hesiod, the legal institutions of Solon, or other serious types of writing. For Plato, such "progeny" could bring longer-lasting credit upon their "parents" than successful generations of children and grandchildren. Committing oneself to the (re)production of ideas was the *real* way to live on, because in such productions one comes into contact, or gives birth to, a beauty that was more enduring than the finite beauty of the body. Heeding this, Plato must have wondered about the reception of his literary progeny by future generations. Did he anticipate that his dialogues alongside the poems of Homer or the chronicles of Thucydides would survive so successfully into our culture that one might believe or hope they always will?

The *Laws* show Plato considering how written legal code should be managed by understanding persons once the legislator was gone,[3] while the later pages of the *Phaedrus* (275c–278b) shows Plato reflecting on the fate of written text and their content once its author could no longer respond to questions.

1 The biographical tradition, as represented by D.L. (3.5), had him composing dithyrambs, lyrics and tragedies in his youth.

2 *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22: *ktêma te es aiei*.

3 The nocturnal council will benefit from the legislative researches of those who have gone off as observers and learned important new things abroad (951c–952d); they are also going to have to understand the goal of statesmanship in order to direct the project into the future (962a–966b). The preservation of the overall code may be paramount, but with the law in their souls minor changes may become acceptable. From the beginning of the institution of the legislative code it was accepted that practicalities had to be taken into consideration (745e–746d).

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Indeed, Plato knew very well that questions would be asked about the meaning of his work and that unlike living persons in dialogue, his texts would go on saying the same thing, just as long as they made straightforward statements at all. Due to this, we can safely presume that he expected his writings would be misunderstood and subject to attack, and that they would therefore need defenders (275d–e). The *Phaedrus* therefore valued leaving successors behind over leaving writings (276e–277a, 277e–278b), but there is no suggestion that the combination of the two could not be the best option.

It is likely that the *Phaedrus*, not afraid to refer to Plato's long-term educational rival Isocrates, was aware that rivalries between writers had the ability to result in attacks of a kind that showed no real understanding of the motives of the writer. It is possible that the opening chapter of Isocrates' *Helen* had the *Protagoras* in mind when criticizing those who tried to prove that all the virtues amount to the same thing and that there is one science of them all. In fact, several stories in the biographical tradition talk of the rivalry between Plato and other educational writers of his day; it is usually hard to evaluate this tradition's reliability, but the overall impression is such as to remind us that Plato was already being responded to in his own lifetime, and perhaps even at the beginning of his career as a writer of dialogues.[4] He may also be responding to criticism in some of his dialogues, but the nature of the dialogue is such as to obscure any contemporary targets, and there is usually little agreement among scholars about alleged cases of indirect attack. Furthermore, attacks on a writer and thinker during his lifetime are influenced by people's response to him *as a person* and *in a particular context*. This is a dimension that largely ceases to be a factor or is greatly reduced (think of Diogenes' personal dislike of Plato's arrogance) once that person has passed away.

It is convenient, therefore, to think of Plato's "reception" in a narrower sense as the response to Plato's *writings* and to other indications of his *philosophy* from 347 BCE, when his death left others to represent him to the world. It will, however, be impossible to overlook the contribution of all who had known him. This is because several of these figures significantly influenced his reception in ways that cannot be ignored. Most obviously, the first two successors as Head of the Academy, Speusippus and more particularly Xenocrates, took

4 See D.L. (3.35) for the anecdote that Socrates had listened to Plato reading the *Lysis* and was astonished at the lies being told about himself; while it seems incredible that the dialogue as we have it could have been written very early in Plato's productive life, it is not implausible that some of our work had been based on earlier sketches, given that the very brief dialogues of Simon the cobbler are supposed to have been memorized versions of actual conversations reported to him by Socrates (2.122–3).

philosophy in directions that would seem to bear some relationship with the direction of Plato's own thought during his later years.

Also important was the account of Plato's writings and arguments that Aristotle was offering at various points of his treatises, and more particularly his reference to "the so–called unwritten doctrines" (*Phys.* 209b14–15) which seem to have been elaborated at greater length in the *On Philosophy*, lost to us but known to the Aristotelian commentators. From Aristotle we receive in particular a rather different account of the principles of Platonic metaphysics: including the One, the Indefinite Dyad, the Ideas, and Matter as "great and small". There is great dissension among modern scholars concerning how seriously we should take these reports, and there was a similar disparity concerning the attention given to them by the ancients. Apart from anything else, what was it that subsequent generations were supposed to be studying and responding to? Was it what Plato had written, or was it what Plato believed? It is difficult to think of "reception" without also postulating a set of texts that must be "received", even if the ultimate exercise is to penetrate the depths of Plato's mind. And again, few would argue that Plato's "beliefs", however they were known to us, were especially important unless he had very good reasons to believe as he did, whether as the result of some particularly strong foundations in argument or because he himself had had access to some superior vision of the world and our place in it. Indeed, the ancients often held that the divine could speak through inspired writings almost in spite of what the author ordinarily thought, and a range of Platonic texts suggest as much (e.g. *Meno* 99c11–d1; *Ion* 533c–534e; *Tim.* 71e–72b). Ancient reception usually involved either a direct response to the writings, or a response to the vision that is taken to underlie the writings, a division that might also be thought to inspire other thinkers or religious systems; in this latter case the reports of Aristotle could indeed become important.

Another follower of Plato who seems to have had his own perspective on the *Laws* in particular was Philip of Opus, who was often held to be the author of the *Epinomis* and who perhaps prepared the *Laws* for publication. The *Epinomis* offers a rather different view of the Platonic universe (especially the heavens), and of Platonic education. Not all the ancients accepted that the *Epinomis* did not have Plato's full authority behind it, and are happy to employ it for the reconstruction of the Platonic system, among them Theon of Smyrna and Apuleius.

Given Plato's apparent willingness to go on thinking his views through and to present them in different ways, it is perhaps not surprising that many of his followers, fully discussed in Dillon (2003), had different perspectives on where his thought was heading at the end of his life. For those who had not known

Plato personally but became intensely interested in his work, they had to seek Plato by looking back through the prism of his immediate followers. An element of uncertainty was introduced, adding to the challenges readers face in confrontation with Plato's infamous ability to withhold any obviously authorial voice from his dialogues, thereby concealing his level of seriousness or playfulness at any given point. These factors have made for a particularly rich reception over the first millennium since Plato started writing. The dialogues would be read both privately and at gatherings, acted through for the entertainment of spectators, imitated in the writings of others, and cited – sometimes for the genuine authority that they offered, sometimes as little more than ornament to testify to the erudition of the later author. They would provoke a variety of reactions, both favourable and unfavourable. Hopefully this volume will be able to offer the modern reader a taste of that wide-ranging response.

II Organization of This Volume

The majority of contributions to this volume are sufficiently limited in time to permit arrangement according to three periods. A few concern early reception as far as Cicero, who was writing approximately three centuries after the death of Plato. Cicero is a major source for earlier philosophy, and professed an allegiance to Plato's school, the Academy, though that school perhaps ceased to exist formally in 88 BCE and had then been under strain from internal disputes about the true heritage of Plato. Consequently Plato is frequently mentioned or alluded to. Cicero also wrote a translation of a large part of Plato's *Timaeus*, which often gives clues concerning how Plato is being interpreted at a particular point. Several of Cicero's philosophic works have survived either in whole or in part, and this stands in sharp contrast to the fate of others discussed in Part I. Only fragments of the work of Plato's early successors, Speusippus and Xenocrates, have survived, so too that of the early Stoics who also claimed to work within the tradition instituted by Socrates, and again this is also the same with the later successors, the so-called "Academic Skeptics". However, sufficient material was thought to survive to warrant articles on these three areas. Something will also be said in the introduction to Part I concerning the more hostile reception encountered among the early Peripatetics and in the Epicureans.

During the first two centuries of the Roman Empire, covered within Part II, it is clear that Plato was widely read, and that he was popular among non-philosophic authors as well as philosophic ones. Accordingly a wide range of chapters will here address a diverse set of authors. Prominent early in the first century CE, Philo of Alexandria used Plato as an authority at regular intervals

in his presentation of the Jewish scriptures to the wider world. Later in the same century and early in the second, Plutarch of Chaeronea, better known as a biographer writing *Lives* of prominent Greeks and Romans, was also the author of several works of philosophy of a broadly Platonist nature, including some that engage with specific points of Platonic interpretation. Already obvious in his work is the strong interest in the mathematics present in Plato's work, which receives detailed attention in the surviving work of his contemporary Theon of Smyrna. Several Platonist authors flourished around the middle of the second century CE, including the versatile Apuleius, whose persona seems to belong between that of Platonist philosopher and sophist, Numenius who was as much a Pythagorean as a Platonist, and perhaps Alcinous, whose sole surviving work, a handbook of Platonist doctrine, is not strictly datable. Other figures of the period, such as Dio and Lucian, offer insights into how Plato could be used in literature of an altogether different kind. The influential medical writer Galen, physician to Marcus Aurelius later in the second century, often makes use of Plato, and wrote summaries of Platonic dialogues as well as a commentary on the medical content of the later pages of the *Timaeus*. By the later years of the second century Plato had also become an author of interest for a variety of Christian authors, especially at Alexandria.

During these centuries the Platonic commentary had also been developing, and some seventy papyrus columns of commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*, copied at around 150CE, give an insight into the type of running commentary that could then be written, together with the kind of issues that would be raised and the answers that could be given. Several columns of this papyrus have recently been displayed at the Neues Museum in Berlin. Less substantial fragments also survive of other commentaries on works of Plato. Together, these remains of commentaries seem to reflect what went on in the teaching of Platonic texts by professors of Platonic philosophy, affording a valuable glimpse into advanced education under the Roman Empire. It is above all these commentaries that offer a link with the Plato studies that continued within the Platonist schools until the sixth century CE.

Part III is dominated by those known as "Neoplatonists", usually conceived as beginning with Plotinus. However, Plotinus himself and many of his successors would have been surprised at the suggestion that he was founding something new. In fact many had seen him as working in the same tradition as Numenius about a century before him. It is clear that Plotinus developed the ideas of his own teacher Ammonius Saccas, who is said to have reconciled the views of Plato and Aristotle but remains a shadowy figure. His philosophic circle was based at Rome, and in it Amelius too was a prominent figure. The school seems to have taken great pains to differentiate itself not only from Numenius

but also from the apocalyptic movements associated with him, especially contemporary Gnostics. All tended to draw inspiration from the same Platonic texts, variously understood, though from many other sources also. Plotinus wrote a large number of contemplative treatises, known as the *Enneads* after Porphyry's arrangement of them into groups of nine, but commentary seems not to have been his style.

We associate commentary rather with Plotinus' pupil Porphyry, who wrote Aristotelian commentaries and a commentary on Ptolemy's *Harmonics* as well as Plato commentaries. These last are now lost, but are usually the source of the detailed interpretations with which Proclus later credits Porphyry. A significant amount of an anonymous commentary on the *Parmenides* survived into modern times in a palimpsest, and appears to stem from somewhere close to the circle of Plotinus. Thereafter Iamblichus became the principal figure in the movement as he sought to isolate the most important works of Plato and to impose rules for their exegesis. His staunch defence of a variety of ancient religious traditions and practices made him a natural enemy of Christianity, and, though Theodorus of Asine appears to have been a most interesting thinker and interpreter of Plato, it was largely Iamblichus who inspired not only the brief attempt to revert to paganism on the part of the Emperor Julian, but also the fifth century CE climax of Platonic studies in the school of Syrianus, as represented in the works of Proclus and Hermias. Damascius was salvaging what he could of that school's traditions, and writing Platonic commentaries that still owed much to Iamblichus, when Justinian the emperor introduced legislation that in effect brought it to a halt, though somehow credible Platonic studies (if with a considerable reduction in theological ideas that Christians would have found objectionable) continued for a time to flourish at Alexandria under Olympiodorus.

Late antiquity also offers us glimpses of the reception of Plato that had little to do with the Neoplatonist scholarly tradition. During Plotinus' lifetime a huge contribution to Christian reception was made by Origen, though some Christians strongly resisted the influence of pre-Christian intellectual figures. The martyrdom of the Platonist mathematician Hypatia at the hands of an Alexandrian Christian mob reminds us that the Platonic tradition could also appeal to women, and perhaps this event more than anything else led the Athenian Neoplatonists to take very seriously the potential of women to achieve as much as men in matters both practical and philosophic. The activities of the Platonizing Emperor Julian were an important reminder that Plato too had political and legislative ambitions, and that the *political* reception of Plato could also be important. But politics increasingly involved Christianity, and throughout these times the range of intellectuals calling themselves Christians

was wide enough to include many who adopted Plato as an insightful figure. Another Brill companion to the reception of Platonism commences with Augustine, who is therefore the last specifically Christian thinker treated here.

Throughout the periods covered there are important developments that do not permit a whole chapter, and others that would involve too much complex discussion to achieve satisfactory results in this format. Accordingly, we have chosen to introduce each period separately, to say a little about each contribution contained within it, and to add material that falls outside the scope of any chapter. Hence the editorial team provides a separate scholarly introduction to each of the three chronological periods, Hellenistic, early imperial and late antique.

PART I

Early Developments in Reception

Introduction: The Old Academy to Cicero

I The Heirs of Plato

The first and fourth chapters in this section represent a period before the rise of the Hellenistic philosophies, when Plato's heritage was still alive and well, and a time when Plato was once again becoming a central figure in philosophic thinking. In between we have essays on the reception of Plato by the Stoics and by the Academic Skeptics, who may still have been preserving glimmers of the school's Platonic heritage, but whose arguments and influence are intimately bound up with their need to counter their Hellenistic, and principally Stoic, opponents.

Reception proper begins with the willingness to receive and build upon the works of another. It does not require the reproduction of doctrines so much as a thoughtful response. Several figures that had studied with Plato do not receive chapters in this book because of a lack of extant material rather than because they did not have such a response. Heraclides of Pontus was one of these, and one for whom the Platonic heritage seems to have been literary rather than doctrinal. He wrote dialogues set in the past, and tackled issues within them that were of such a kind as might easily have attracted Plato too. An account of Heraclides that sets him clearly, if somewhat loosely, within the Platonic tradition is given by Dillon (2003).[1]

The figure of Hermodorus of Syracuse is notable for two reasons. First, he wrote a book about Plato, demonstrating both his own interest in the master and that of an appreciable audience. Second, he traded in Plato's books in his native Sicily, thus incurring sufficient disapproval from certain people to make his retail activities into a semi-humorous proverbial crime.[2] Dillon, who again offers a useful account of this figure,[3] spends most time on fragments 7–8, which offer a version of Platonic categories and a Platonic theory of matter that seem to be based, independently of Aristotle, on Plato's oral teaching, and thus presumably on a rather late stage of Plato's thinking.

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1 See particularly Dillon (2003), 204–16.

2 Fragments 1–3 Isnardi Parente. In fr. 2 Cicero uses the word *divulgare*, suggesting their premature circulation among an audience for which they were not yet intended (like Atticus' passing on book five of the *De Finibus* to Balbus before its dedicatee had received it). If so, they may have been versions distributed prior to the Academic editing that is usually presumed to have occurred under Xenocrates.

3 Dillon (2003), 198–204.

This brings us to an important feature of the reception of Plato by his own pupils. Many of those who had studied with him in the last decades of his life, and had responded to the Platonic heritage as insiders, were primarily concerned with his later creative phase, from the *Republic* on perhaps,[4] rather than on works commonly thought to have preceded the *Republic*. The most obvious instance, if the relevant reports are to be believed, is the case of Philip of Opus' work to finalize the project that Plato had undertaken in the *Laws*. Here we should quote unnamed persons mentioned in the anonymous *Prolegomena to Plato's Philosophy* (24.13–19):

> They say that the *Laws* was the last to be written, because [Plato] left them uncorrected and disorganized (*adiorthôtous kai sunkekhymenous*), because he failed to have enough time to assemble (*syntheinai*) them on account of his death; and even if they now seem to have been compiled (*syntetakhthai*) properly, this is not due to Plato himself having been their compiler (*tou synthentos*), but to Philip of Opus, who became an inheritor of Plato's school.

While the final clause, if it is intended to mean that Philip at some time became scholarch, would be at odds with our other testimony, and while "inheritor" (*diadokhos*) would normally refer to a scholarch, it is by no means certain that the persons concerned had meant to imply that he was an inheritor *in that sense*, but rather that he was an inheritor of this particular educational project. There is no particular reason to distrust this rather unusual information,[5] and the four verbs that begin with *syn–* reinforce the impression that Philip undertook a considerable task of organization. This seems to have earned him the title of *anagrapheus*,[6] not a simple word for a secretarial assistant, but used rather to denote the "promulgator" of laws. That the *Laws* did not represent the definitive version as contributed by Plato's own hand is suggested by a passage in Book IX that speaks of the law code as a work that is not thoroughly worked out and still taking shape from disparate materials (857c, 858b–c). Whatever the case regarding Philip's reorganization, to which Diogenes Laertius also

4 Dillon makes several references to *Tim.* in his discussion of Heraclides' doctrine, and also has cause to refer to the Myth of Er in *Rep.* X.

5 We do not know the dates of those who placed the *Phaedrus* first and the *Laws* last, but they were not Neoplatonists, since D.L. (3.38, cf. 62) refers to them, linking it with the view that the Phaedrus was immature, and linking that in turn with the Peripatetic Dicaearchus.

6 Philodemus, *Index Academicorum* III.38–39: γεγονὼς ἀναγραφεὺς τοῦ Πλάτωνος καὶ ἀκουστής. Plato uses the verb *anagraphein* six times in the parts of the *Laws* in where legislation is most concentrated (VI 784c, d, e; VIII 850a; XI 917e; XII 947b), chiefly in the sense of officially recording something.

testifies (3.37),[7] his authorship of the *Epinomis* is rather better attested,[8] and that too seems to have been an attempt to round off Plato's project, as well as to contribute his own particular understanding of Plato's later educational, cosmological and theological theory. Again it was furthering Plato's ongoing work that seemed to matter, not preserving intact any perfect system, so that even though Plato's oral legacy was still exercising an influence, it was influencing a direction of development not constraining the minds of his successors.

As for Speusippus, Plato's nephew who became the first scholarch (formal head) of the Academy, the ancients seem to have believed that he was for the most part true to Plato's doctrines. This may be learned from Diogenes Laertius' statement (4.1) and from Numenius' less conciliatory remarks about the Old Academy (fr. 24.5–18). In this latter case it is the general character (*êthos*) of the doctrine that was said to remain unchanged, but they were said to have "dropped some [doctrines] while distorting others" (24.11), failing to do their utmost to preserve unanimity in all matters. Since it is notorious that Speusippus did not accept the existence of transcendent Ideas, and was a more pronounced anti-hedonist,[9] it is clear that he felt under no obligation to abide by everything that Plato had promoted. Besides a hint that he may have explained creation in the *Timaeus* along the same figurative lines as Xenocrates,[10] it is difficult to extract from the surviving fragments[11] anything more significant about his reception of Plato than an *Encomium of Plato* in the list of Speusippus' works (D.L. 4.4–5)[12] – unless we look rather towards his reception of an educational project and of the place of division and classification within it. This is what Phillip Horky has done in chapter one, arguing that Speusippus "was

7 It would seem that the lack of final order, or malleability, of the law-code at the time of Plato's death is captured by Diogenes phrase "in wax" (ἐν κηρῷ), for it scarcely seems possible that it could all have been written on wax tablets. Note that no doubts seem to have been expressed in antiquity about the *Laws* having faithfully reflected Platonic thought.

8 Besides the important book of Tarán (1975) on this work and its author, see now Alesse and Ferrari (2012), Tulli and Petrucci (2013).

9 It might either be freedom from all pain and pleasure or, with Horky, simply "freedom from disturbance" that is thought of as the goal of decent people (the word being *aokhlêsia*, fr. 101 IP = F79 T).

10 Fr. 95 IP = F61b T; One should note here that Dillon (2003), 60–63, sees the influence of *Tim.* behind Speusippus *On Pythagorean Numbers* (fr. 11 IP = F28 T), which is extensively quoted in the *Theologoumena Arithmêtikês*, though the project is being represented rather as Pythagorean reception.

11 Collected by Tarán (1981) and Isnardi Parente (1980).

12 See fr. 2 IP = T1 T; It may be this work that is cited at D.L. 3.2 (fr. 147 IP = F1a T) as *The Funeral Banquet of Plato*, for that was clearly laudatory.

committed to developing theories of definitional dialectic that were focused on proper procedure, which could not proceed solely from aliorelatives if they were to obtain the proper essences of things." The Speusippan project appears to relate particularly to "those [Platonic] dialogues composed later in life", and so to emphasize matters of science and mathematics.

Horky continues his chapter with a new look at Xenocrates as an inheritor of the Platonic legacy. A little more may be deduced from the fragments about Xenocrates' reception of Plato, though mainly thanks to material in Plutarch's work *On the Psychogony in the Timaeus* (frr. 158, 188 IP[1]), material that may have been passed down in the commentary tradition, beginning with Crantor the work's first exegete. Might it perhaps be inferred that Xenocrates' approach to philosophic teaching did not involve the systematic exegesis of Platonic texts in a way that later became the norm? Seeing in Xenocrates educational ideals and practice akin to that of Speusippus, Horky (p. 44) detects "a positive epistemology ultimately assumed from Socratic debates in the *Republic*, *Meno*, and *Phaedo*", while looking rather to the Eleatic Stranger and Timaeus "for the procedures and subject areas relevant to education".

Aristotle was another pupil of Plato who responds to him in a variety of works, but for the most parts his responses are found in works that were written as an independent teacher of his own philosophy. Most often the views that he associates with Plato are among those that he rejects before finally coming to his own position. Sometimes Aristotle is responding to a Plato that we can relate to because it is familiar from a fairly literal reading of the dialogues, while at other times he draws upon what he has heard himself of school discussions, or what others have reported. It is from Aristotle, therefore, that most of our information about Plato's much discussed unwritten doctrines comes, though the term was probably not his own since he refers to "those doctrines that are called 'unwritten'" (*ta legomena agrapha dogmata*, *Phys.* 209b15). It is entirely possible, given the tendency of Plato's successors to take his work one step further, that some of those still representing themselves as Academics were making much of what Plato had spoken about but never committed to writing, whether because of lack of opportunity or because they were inherently not the kind of views that he thought could be promulgated. It is particularly interesting in this context that Hermias, in considering Plato's remarks about the superiority of oral teaching in the *Phaedrus*, has oral philosophy being passed from Socrates to Plato, from Plato to Xenocrates, and from Xenocrates to Polemo.[13] This may

13 See on Hermias below (ch. 26 sec. VI).

be an indication that it was Xenocrates who most commonly looked to Plato's oral teaching for support, explaining why Aristotle, as head of a rival school, was inclined to attack it.

II Aristotle and His School

Aristotle's reports of Plato's oral teaching have been the subject of several books, among them those of Harold Cherniss (1944 and 1945); they have been central to the work of the Tübingen school of Platonic studies, as represented by the works of Konrad Gaiser, Hans-Joachim Krämer, and Thomas Szlezák[14]; their work has been given interesting new support from across the Atlantic by Gerson (2013), while Gerson (2005) has also been instrumental in promoting the view that Aristotle had been faithful to Plato in many unexpected ways, and indeed that he was Plato's greatest pupil. Nor can it be denied that he built further on Plato's thought in many areas as he thought appropriate. His reception of Plato is thus a topic that could legitimately demand a companion volume to this one, and no mere chapter could have done justice to the complexity of the issues and the variety of modern scholarship. We shall therefore content ourselves with just a few remarks about his reception of *Platonic dialogues*, usually though not exclusively dialogues from the *Republic* onwards.

In the first chapter of the *Poetics* Aristotle mentions the Socratic dialogue, alongside the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus, as being a mimetic form of literature that operates by words alone, indicating that he recognizes it as being something more than a simple vehicle for the exposition of one's philosophy. In an earlier work *On Poets* (fr. 3 Ross) he also regards such dialogues as belonging to a genre founded by Alexamenus of Teos. However, this does not mean that his extant treatises ever treat Plato's works as something that requires the kind of interpretation expected of literary works in dramatic form. Like those for whom these works were written he is interested rather in the soundness of the ideas that the dialogues had promoted, and at *Politics* 2.6 he even includes the *Laws* among "the discussions of Socrates" which were all supposed to have been "ingenious and innovative and inquisitive" (1265a10–12), which is presumably a telling slip rather than the result of his knowing an earlier version of our text. Here the *Politics* had been offering an extended discussion of Plato's theoretical states, and the previous five chapters had dealt

14 See Nikulin (2012) for a collection of essays by proponents of the Tübingen school: J. Halfwassen, V. Hösle and D. Nikulin in addition to K. Gaiser, H. J. Krämer, T. A. Szlezák.

only with that of the *Republic*, before this one chapter comparing that of *Laws*. It seems clear that the latter work had failed completely to attract the same public attention as its predecessor, in spite of the greater attention to detail that Aristotle could see there and the by-passing of the *Republic*'s most controversial ideas like the community of women and of property.

From the point of view of the history of Plato's reception it is Aristotle's reading of the *Timaeus* that proved most controversial. Here it is noteworthy that he is already responding (*de Caelo* 1.10.279b32–280a3) to the position of Xenocrates and (probably) Speusippus to the effect that the Platonic picture of the world being generated at a given time, found in the *Timaeus* and evidently still being promoted as useful, is "for the sake of instruction". It helps in the same way that those witnessing a geometrical proof are helped if they can observe a diagram being generated. Aristotle is of course arguing against the assumption that the world can be both generated and indissoluble, an assumption that he finds explicit in the *Timaeus* (28a30–32).[15] Neither here nor in the following argument against the position of the *Timaeus* (*de Caelo* 1.12–2.1) is there any close discussion of the Platonic text or what is meant by it, as if Aristotle is not concerned about what Plato believed but what his work may be assumed to be saying. The same may be said of a few other references to the *Timaeus* in the *de Caelo*,[16] and at times Aristotle's simplification induces him to understand Plato in a misleading way related to his own way of seeing the world, as where he affirms that the *Timaeus* identified location and matter (*Phys.* 209b11–12). However, given that Plato's successors had themselves taken ownership of the *Timaeus*, Aristotle may also have in mind ways in which they too were interpreting the work, and in particular its receptacle.

There are other dialogues of Plato with which Aristotle engages from time to time. Several important essays on Aristotle's reception of Plato can be found in Harte, McCabe, Sharples and Sheppard (2010), of which three make the *Meno* central, one the *Philebus*, one the *Symposium*, while McCabe's essay on the way in which *Metaphysics* Z 13–16 engages with Plato concerns a range of works. It is well worth citing a key sentence of her conclusion:

> On either account, this Plato is not a single monolithic set of doctrines, but rather a set of views, loosely or generically similar, but distinct,

15 He also argues (285a25–29) against the assumption that the world could be destructible in its own nature but never actually destroyed (*Tim.* 41b).

16 The work refers to the explicitly refers to *Tim.* also at 293b32, 300a1, b17, 306b19 and 308b5; there are also several references to the work in *De Generatione et Corruptione*, two in the *Phys.* and two in the *DA*.

> dialogue by dialogue (across a broad spectrum of dialogues: *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, *Cratylus*, *Timaeus*).[17]

This suggests that Aristotle was *in this case* engaging very much with the kind of Plato that we think we know from our reading of the dialogues, not with some neatly packaged system marketed as the "unwritten doctrines". Other essays in the same volume also give one the same impression: Aristotle could engage separately with the arguments and conclusions of a range of Platonic dialogues from the *Meno* through to the *Philebus*. And when this is what he was doing the discussion did not have to be premised on any fixed metaphysical system that held the key to all or most dialogues. In fact it is in the very same passage, *Physics* 209b11–17, that Aristotle (a) makes the *Timaeus'* receptacle both location and matter, and (b) refers to "those doctrines that are called 'unwritten'"; but he treats the two as involving significantly different theories.[18] Aristotle understood the importance both of answering the dialogues, singly and collectively, and of responding to the metaphysical underpinnings of Plato's system, whether as he personally understood them or as others depicted them to be. In the end what mattered to him was not what Plato believed but eliminating all theories that he considered mistaken, particularly those that he took to be influential.

Aristotle's reception of Plato was not by any means confined to physics and metaphysics, for his ethical works keep revisiting Platonic themes, critiquing Plato's contribution but also trying to build upon whatever helpful foundations Plato could offer.[19] Perhaps the most important influences emerge in the final book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where the discussion of pleasure first builds upon Academic debate including the *Philebus* in chapters 2–3, and then proceeds to develop further the idea of pleasure as an important ingredient of a human life, even though it should be aiming more directly at some kind of life, a life which will give pleasure if unimpeded, and particularly at the theoretical life. In his description of the theoretical life Aristotle resorts to talk of the divine and of "acting the immortal as far as possible" (1177b33), which is surely a deliberate echo of the Platonic formula of "assimilation to the divine as far as possible" (*Theaetetus* 176b1). This involves giving priority to the life of what is most divine in us, a priority with which Plato could hardly disagree, least of all if Plato is the author of the *Alcibiades I* (133c).

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17 McCabe (2010), 100.

18 They differ in respect of what is "that which comes to participate" (*to metalêptikon*), though sharing a similar approach to place or location.

19 On the connections see particularly Gerson (2005), 242–274.

While Aristotle and Xenocrates vied over who would educate Athens the generation of philosophers with personal experience of Plato was dying out. Theophrastus, Head of Aristotle's school, the Lyceum or Peripatos, is said to have heard Plato before switching his allegiance to Aristotle. But it is highly unlikely that he spent long enough with the aging Plato to have any special insights into his philosophy. The catalogue of his works (D.L. 5.2–50) and his extant remains demonstrate a strong interest in Presocratic philosophy, but the only title of special relevance to Plato is the *Epitome of Plato's Republic* in two books. However, Theophrastus too was unable to ignore Plato's *Timaeus*, most particularly in the *De Sensu*, on which Baltussen has provided some learned and intriguing commentary;[20] from this it emerges that Theophrastus uses his knowledge of the *Timaeus* very selectively, sometimes rearranging material, mixing quotation and paraphrase, basing criticisms on his own theoretical framework, and systematically attacking Plato on matters of definition and of genus. Baltussen draws the conclusion that Theophrastus was guilty of "a degree of manipulation and/or unfairness", and makes the interesting suggestion that Theophrastus may have been working from a personal summary. [21]

Likewise Theophrastus' name occurs frequently in Proclus' commentary on that work. On the very first lemma of the commentary, and after a short discussion of Longinus' approach to it, Proclus tells us that "Praxiphanes ... the friend of Theophrastus" (*in Tim.* I 14.20–21) criticizes the first words of the *Timaeus* on the grounds that Socrates (a) did not have to be counting his friends, and that he should not have switched between cardinals or ordinals. We know that Proclus' information came from Porphyry, but one wonders whether Porphyry had been aware of the criticism through Theophrastus' having repeated it. Theophrastus' name recurs again at I 120.30, in relation to the debate over the Nile floods, at I 456.17 when he is praised for noting that Plato premised causation on providence, at II 6.22 where he tackles Plato on how the senses grasp the universe at *Timaeus* 31b, at II 120.19–122.11 on the generation of the soul at 35a, at III 136.2 on soul again at 40c, and at III.151.2 on Chaldaean astrology.[22] Not all of the material is hostile, and not all is from Theophrastan discussions of the *Timaeus*, but he does again emerge as one who *read* that dialogue with

20 See chapter 4 of Baltussen (2000) and more especially Baltussen (2003), 51–56.

21 Baltussen (2003), 55–57.

22 It is notable that the name of Theophrastus is not present in book 5 of the commentary, where Porphyry's input has almost disappeared.

close interest, though rather literally and not as one who intended to penetrate to the depths of Plato's intent.

In other Procline works devoted to Platonic exegesis Theophrastus is mentioned at the beginning of the *Republic*-commentary (*in Remp.* I) 8.15 with regard to the name he gave to the work; early in the *Cratylus*-commentary (*in Crat.* 16.30); twice in Book one of the *in Parmenidem* (635.5, 659.14–17); in the *Alcibiades*-commentary but as an example rather than one whose observation were relevant to the text (*in Alc.* 309); while in the *Platonic Theology* he is mentioned only with regard to what he had said about people not valuing soul without body, recalling *in Tim.* II 122.10–14 and III 136.1–2.[23] Overall these references do not look upon Theophrastus as an exegete, but rather as a well regarded critic who had to be answered by the earliest Platonist commentators.

Other Peripatetics are likewise known to have criticized Platonic texts. We have mentioned Proclus' use of Praxiphanes, and Dicaearchus (fr. 44 = D.L. 3.38) is known to have criticized the *Phaedrus*, as well as Plato's psychological doctrines more generally.[24] Strato of Lampsacus was likewise no friend of Plato, and Damascius (*in Phd.* 2.63) preserves a collection of seven arguments of his against the argument from opposites in the *Phaedo*. Nor was it long before Epicurus, no friend of his rivals and active in Athens from 306 BCE, had joined the critics of the *Timaeus* and of Plato more generally,[25] followed by Colotes who seems to have extended Epicurean polemics to Socrates as well,[26] and whom we shall discuss shortly.

III The "First Interpreter" and the Academy under Polemo

Criticism does not go unanswered. It is no accident that the Academic scholar whom Proclus (*in Tim.* I 76.1–2) calls "the first exegete" was a contemporary of Theophrastus, and almost certainly no friend of Theophrastus, from whom he is said to have poached the quick-witted young Arcesilaus (D.L. 4.29–30). Unfortunately we do not have as much information of these exegetical activities as

23 Damascius also mentions Theophrastus in Platonic commentaries (*in Phd.* 1.547, *in Phlb.* 147–8).

24 Fr. 5 = *adv. Col.* 1115a; Plutarch also mentions Aristotle, Heraclides (included here among Peripatetics), and Theophrastus in this context.

25 Baltussen (2003), 56–58.

26 Vander Waerdt (1989).

we would have wished, and, while they may have extended to dialogues other that the *Timaeus*, we have no information about them.[27] Proclus refers to him only once more (1.277.8–10), as the originator of a view that explained Plato's description of the world as "generated" in terms of its being dependent on a cause other than itself. Plutarch refers to his work on the *Timaeus* a number of times in *De Animae Procreatione* (1012d–1013b, 1020c, 1022c–d, 1027d), and the phrase "those who take the position of Crantor" (*hoi peri ton Krantora*, 1012f, 1022d) and the fact that Eudorus follows him at 1020c both testify to his having been influential, firstly regarding the basic construction of the soul at *Timaeus* 35a, and secondly regarding its harmonic arrangement. It is noteworthy that Crantor interpreted the universal soul as having been constructed out of the same basic ingredients that it was intended to have cognition of, intelligible, sensible, and the differences and similarities – both internal and between one another (1012f–1013a). For Platonic cognition was for him, as Aristotle had already observed (*de Anima* 406b16–18), of like by like.

Since the human soul was constructed according to the same principle (*Timaeus* 41d), only less perfectly so, this would have made it an entity naturally designed to have cognition of all it needed to know, if somewhat imperfectly so. So our souls would have been designed for the cognition and comparison of two types of reality, being by nature intermediate between the two, the familiar objects of sense (presumably bodily things) and the objects of intellection (presumably some variation on Platonic idea-paradigms). While this may exhaust the things that we know, it does not exclude further entities less accessible to our cognition, and most obviously god and matter, for the *Timaeus* observes that there are special difficulties in the cognition of the creator-god (28c), and that the receptacle (presumably identified with matter) is "touched on by a kind of artificial reasoning in the absence of sensation" (52b). These were things of which we could have no like-by-like cognition, assuming that our souls did not also have god and matter in their composition.

Given Crantor's closeness to Arcesilaus, the insight into his epistemological thinking given by his views on the world-soul is intriguing, for this interpretation justified *both* the view that human beings were endowed with considerable cognitive gifts such as to equip them for philosophy *and* the exercise of caution concerning particular problematic questions given the imperfections that

27 It is possible that the 30,000 lines of commentaries (*hypomnêmata*) mentioned by D.L. (4.24) are from Platonic commentaries; but there had been some doubt in antiquity as to whether Arcesilaus might have been at least partly responsible for them. Tarrant (2013) suggested that there may have been a commentary on the *Theaetetus*.

affected the human soul but not the universal soul. It also allowed for the existence of a divine and a material principle, neither of which was routinely available to human cognition at all. However, Crantor may have died in 290 BCE, approximately twenty-five years before Arcesilaus would take control of the Academy, and there would be plenty of time for Arcesilaus to develop what he had learned from Crantor in novel ways.

Meanwhile the school remained for most of that time under Polemo's management and for the remainder under that of Polemo's partner Crates who is not suspected of making any innovations. Polemo himself had a reputation chiefly for his contribution to ethics and for living the kind of life that others wanted to emulate. It was no doubt within this umbrella that Polemo developed his own theory of Socratic love, about which there has been recent discussion,[28] and which proved influential in late antiquity. The emphasis on practical ethics and on a higher kind of love make it plausible to think of Polemo as somehow involved in a revival in the fortunes of the Platonic Socrates, something that becomes even more attractive once one bears in mind that Zeno of Citium, the founder of another Socratic school, is supposed to have studied with him for a time. Strictly speaking, however, very little is known about Polemo's reception of Plato, and the sources do not regard him as an innovator.[29]

The chief hope of saying a little more would seem to be offered by the acceptance, for Polemo, of at least part of the account of Old Academic philosophy offered by Cicero's "Varro" at *Academica* 1.19–42. Sedley (2002) put the case for the physics in particular owing much to Polemo, and Dillon (2003) relies on the physics and logic to flesh out a Polemonian version of Academic doctrine.[30] However, we know so little about Polemo's writings and any context in which he might have required a summary of *his own* Academic philosophy, and have every reason to suppose that much of the picture had come to Cicero from Antiochus of Ascalon whose position "Varro" represents, that we cannot be sure enough of the details to make reliable suggestions about how Polemo might have been interpreting Plato. Indeed, once again there is more in our sources about his reception of the Platonic educational project than on his manipulation of doctrine.

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28 See Dillon (1994), Dillon (2003), 165–6, Tarrant (2012), and Renaud and Tarrant (2015), 108–10, 175–6; the *Alcibiades 1* is central to this discussion.

29 D.L. (4.19) speaks of him as emulating Xenocrates in everything.

30 Dillon (2003), 168–76.

Polemo has some claim to have been a teacher of Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school, though the information comes through Antiochus of Ascalon, who would have had good reason to make the most of any connection. Presumably he himself will have read reports that Zeno "heard" Polemo, which is the potentially confusing way that the Greeks usually refer to the pupil-master relationship. At any rate the Stoics seem to have made much of various passages in Plato, as the contribution of Alesse argues. She concentrates on the Stoic appropriation of aspects of Plato's portrait of Socrates in dialogues like the *Protagoras* and *Euthydemus*, on their response to the *Theaetetus* (which could have been part of the same Socratic project), and on their picture of the governance of the single universe, which arguably draws inspiration from the *Timaeus*. Zeno also wrote a *Republic* that incorporated elements of erotic theory such as is found in the *Symposium* into the utopian state. It is perhaps no accident that the Socratic, the erotic, and the *Timaeus* (avoiding taking the figure of the creator too seriously) were all receiving attention in the work of Polemo and Crantor.

IV The Hellenistic Philosophies in Debate

However, it was regarding epistemology that the defining dispute of the Hellenistic age was to occur. The Stoics not only paid close attention to the *Theaetetus* as discussed in Alesse's contribution, they also tried to solve its final problem by trying to show what it is that can make an act of judgment into the realization of something's truth, and thus have it contribute to a system of knowledge. Their solution, while a more satisfying empirical explanation of knowledge than had been produced by Epicurus, brought a hostile reaction from the Academy, and particularly from Crantor's close friend Arcesilaus, who may or may not have become Head of the Academy by this time.

As Snyder explains, the evidence for Arcesilaus and the "New Academy" that he is supposed to have introduced is sparse and difficult to handle. Though we refer to them as "skeptics" we cannot be sure that they used this term or even that they would have approved of it. He failed to record the stance that he took even on the central issues of epistemology, and much of what has come down to us comes from opponents and suffers from elements of satire or polemic. His classes seem to have been successful in part because of his skills in argument, and he preferred turning these skills against his opponents to justifying doctrines associated with the Academy. However, there is a little that can be said about the way in which he and his successors read Plato – or at very least the way in which they justified their refusal to come to firm conclusions, and

it is generally agreed that it was the Socratic element in Plato, popular with Stoics too, that most attracted him, whether because he found inspiration in it, or simply because it was here that there was most scope for anti-Stoic argument.

It may be significant that the Epicurean school too was also turning its polemical attention to Socrates now, even though he had escaped lightly at the hands of Epicurus himself.[31] The protagonist seems to have been Epicurus' young friend Colotes, whose polemic against Socrates, among other philosophers, would be reported and answered by Plutarch in his *adversus Colotem* (1116e–1119c).[32] It is noteworthy that he wrote two partially extant pamphlet-like works, sometimes referred to as "anti-commentaries" though they do not have a commentary-like structure, *Against Plato's Lysis* and *Against Plato's Euthydemus*. Though very fragmentary, these books from the charred remains of Philodemus' library at Herculaneum are especially valuable for the insights they offer into third-century debates surrounding the Platonic Socrates. The later of the two pamphlets contains a possible reference to Arcesilaus' school:

> ἢ [φῶμεν ὡς] οἱ ἐπόχω[ς | τῶν ταχέων ἐλατ|τω πράττουσ[ι]ν.
> *in Euthd.* 11C 3

The most characteristic novelty of Arcesilaus was his argument that the sage would practice suspension of judgment (ἐποχή), and if this reading is correct it implies an attack on the reluctance to make decisions, since it would prove impractical. Arcesilaus was also famous for his practice of arguing both *pro* and *contra*, and we know that the New Academy had offered an argument for Plato having been a "suspensionist" based on his own use of *argumentum in utramque partem*, and the *Lysis* is the first dialogue to be mentioned in this regard (*Proleg.* 10.16–20), and for good reasons.[33] It is rare for the *Lysis* to be mentioned by ancient Platonists, even in contexts discussing Plato's view of friendship, and one wonders whether Colotes' attack on it, aimed at a part of

31 Vander Waerdt (1989).

32 On Colotes' polemic see Crönert (1906), 1–16, 162–72; Concolino Mancini (1976); Giannantoni (1984); Ioppolo (1986), 183–5; Kechagia (2011), 47–142.

33 Even Proclus (*in Parm.* I 654.11–13, V 989.10–23) regards it as a prime example of a dialogue using argument *in utramque partem*, and affirms that it investigates what is a friend, and shows "at one moment that like is friend to like, and at another that opposite is friend to opposite; at one moment that it is the befriender, and at another that it is the befriended" (I 654.19–21), and at 222e3–4 Plato affirms the fact that contrary theses have been rejected.

it where contrary arguments are employed,[34] already has Arcesilaus' methods in mind. Whatever the case, it may certainly be said that Colotes seems to have shifted the attack on Plato away from the *Timaeus* that had previously been the focus of inter-school debate, towards works of a more Socratic nature. It is logical to assume that this coincides with an increased importance of these works in other schools, not only in the Academy but also in Stoic ethics.[35]

Attacks on the Socratic Plato could have been prompted by a revived Socratic interest in the Academy, and they could in turn reinforce the interest in Socrates as the Academy devised its defence against the charges. An attack on Socrates' use of contrary arguments, for instance, may very well have prompted a reply known from Diogenes Laertius 2.29. Five Platonic dialogues are known to have been used in antiquity as examples of Socrates' willingness to argue both for and against: *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Phaedrus* and *Theaetetus*.[36] It is probably no accident that three of these, *Theaetetus*, *Euthyphro*, and *Lysis*, appear in Diogenes Laertius as cases where the conversations reported by Plato resulted in a significant improvement of the eponymous interlocutors, making Theaetetus inspired (*entheos*), Euthyphro willing to drop his case and Lysis extremely moral (*êthikôtatos*). All these dialogues end inconclusively, and the alleged improvements,[37] which cannot be attributed to any positive teaching, are attributed to Socrates' skills in protreptic or apotreptic, "because he had the ability to discover arguments derived from the actual facts".[38] Hence

34 Much of the discussion attacks Plato's reliance on the poets, but it is hard to be sure which passages he had in mind; the notion of a good poet is to be found at 206b, but poets enter the methodology of the investigation most obviously at 213e–214a; this has perhaps been foreshadowed at 212e, and more poetic authority is introduced at 215c–d, supporting a thesis opposite it to that of 214a.

35 Contrary arguments may have been only important to the Academy after Arcesilaus had become prominent, but issues of love and friendship had been important to Polemo and Zeno of Citium (and indeed to Epicurus); for the *Euthyd.* and Stoic ethics see above and Alesse's chapter.

36 Anon. *Proleg.* 10.18–20 gives the first three as examples; *Phaedrus* is attacked by unnamed critics in Hermias (*in Phdr.* 10.12–18 Lucarini & Moreschini = 9.13–19 Couvreur: conceivably Dicaearchus, see D.L. 3.38); and *Theaetetus* is used as an example by Proclus (*in Parm.* I 654.14–17).

37 Only at the end of the *Tht.* is any positive outcome seen in the text, though it might be read into Euthyphro's hasty departure at the end of *Euthyphro*; some of the evidence may be drawn from the assumed historical facts.

38 There follow three more examples drawn from Xenophon, his soothing Lamprocles' anger against his mother (*Memorabilia* 2.2), his discouragement of Glaucon from politics (*Memorabilia* 3.6), and his encouragement of Charmides into politics (*Memorabilia* 3.7);

Socrates turns out to be a fine teacher in the end not because he espouses any philosophical position, since he may argue both sides of the case, but rather because of his versatility at discovering any required argument from real life. This line of defence is very much in accord with our expectations of Arcesilaus.

As we move to the second century BCE the Academy is dominated by Carneades, and the Stoa by Antipater and his pupil Panaetius. The evidence for these Stoics' devotion to Plato is actually stronger than any for Carneades, whose decision to follow Arcesilaus in not writing makes us singularly reliant on what sources have thought fit to record, and who was variously interpreted even by those who followed him. It is plausible that the unwillingness of Carneades and other Academics to make direct appeals to the authority of Plato left the door open to a more thorough appropriation of at least part of his legacy by contemporary Stoics.[39] Carneades and his followers are treated in the final section of Snyder's chapter, while Panaetius' reception of Plato is discussed in that of Alesse. At this point it is perhaps worth noting that Panaetius seems also to have made a wider investigation into Socrates, regarding all the "Socratic dialogues" of Plato, Xenophon, Antisthenes and Aeschines as being "true" or "authentic", hesitating over those of Phaedo of Elis and Euclides, and rejecting those of other writers (D.L. 2.64). That would appear to suggest that he took much of what Plato put into the mouth of Socrates as being faithful to the general character of Socratic conversation, though late Neoplatonic evidence has him rejecting the *Phaedo* for reasons associated with Socrates' sustained argument for the immortality of the soul.

V The World of Cicero

In the early first century BCE further we can see some efforts on the part of the Academy to give the appearance, at least, of being more conscious of the legacy of the school's founder Plato. Even before this, at around 110 BCE, we know from Cicero's *De Oratore* (see 1.45–47, 84–94) that Charmadas, never

while the first has no obvious connection with arguments *pro* and *contra*, the second and third because of their coming together in Xenophon may easily be seen as a case of it. In the case of Lamprocles there may be an answer to a further charge brought against the Socrates of the *Euthyphro* and *Lysis*: that he failed to encourage respect for one's father in the former when it was desperately required, and that he undermined respect for both parents in the latter (207d–210d). Xenophon has Socrates putting a good case for Lamprocles' gratitude to and respect for his mother.

39 See on this Tarrant (2000), 56–58.

actually Head of School but a prominent Academic who had himself heard Carneades, was prepared to teach Plato's *Gorgias* and to make use of it alongside the *Phaedrus* in his attack on rhetoric-without-philosophy.[40] Philo of Larissa had just then taken over as Head of the Academy, and appears to have gradually softened the assumed "skepticism" of Carneades, without ever conceding the most contentious issue of epistemology: the possibility of a criterion of knowledge such as the Stoics defined it.[41] Around 90 BCE Antiochus of Ascalon[42] was already teaching apart from Philo, and claiming to be presenting "Old Academic" as opposed to "New Academic" views. It is important that this was not solely the expected attempt to enlist the support of Plato on his side, but a new acknowledgement of the importance of Plato's earlier successors, and it may have resulted from the fact that Posidonius the Stoic was beginning to seek clarification of Plato's views, especially in the *Timaeus*, from the early Academic tradition, seemingly taking note of Speusippus as well as Xenocrates and Crantor.[43] However, the acknowledgement of a valuable earlier tradition that had not been preserved within the Academy presented a direct challenge to the school's claim to represent the whole Plato. The school itself disintegrated in 88 BCE because of the second Mithridatic war, and Philo came to Rome, where he wrote two books that attacked the idea that the Academy that he represented differed from that which had endured until the time of Crantor and Polemo. In so doing he reclaimed the authority of Plato, and Antiochus was visibly distressed when he encountered Philo's books in Alexandria a little later, and wrote an uncompromising reply of his own that sanctioned the Stoic criterion, and with it virtually the whole Stoic epistemology.

The debate over these matters lies behind the fragmentary remains of Cicero's *Academica* and some later echoes in Augustine's *contra Academicos*. In the final version of the work Cicero had undertaken to represent the views of Philo himself, and adopted Varro as his spokesman for Antiochus; the reception of Plato is treated from both points of view at *Academica* 1.15–42 (Antiochus) and 44–46 (Philo). Philo is simpler. The passage speaks of a Plato *cuius in libris nihil adfirmatur et in utramque partem multa disseruntur, de omnibus quaeritur,*

40 On this period see Sedley (2012), Lévy (2010), Brittain (2001), and Tarrant (1985); on Charmadas see Lévy (2005).

41 The fragments are found in Brittain (2001), somewhat more conveniently than in Mette (1986).

42 On Antiochus there is a considerable division of opinion; Sedley (2012) is a recommended starting point, since it clearly represents various perspectives on this difficult figure.

43 Merlan (1968).

nihil certi dicitur ("in whose books nothing is affirmed, many questions are argued on both sides, there is a search into everything, and nothing is stated for certain", *Ac.* 1.46). It is the kind of Plato that is promoted in modern times by many who emphasize the importance of the dialogue form, enabling the author to hide while he examines a question from several points of view, and often including caveats in cases where he appears to be reaching conclusions. As at *Academica* 2.74, Plato is thought of as adopting this stance because of the influence of Socratic ignorance. It is a cautious rather than a skeptical Plato. Though the text is here about to break off it does not seem that any detailed account of Platonic theory, however cautious, is about to be offered.[44]

Rather than giving an account specific to Plato, Antiochus' spokesman offers at *Academica* 1.15–42 an account of a single philosophy shared by Plato, the Old Academy, and, with a few modifications either in substance or in terminology, by the Peripatetics and Zeno the Stoic. The whole passage has given rise to much controversy, with Sedley (2002 and 2012) and Dillon (2003) arguing for substantial Old Academic influence, but others, e.g. Inwood (2012), being less convinced.[45] In many ways the account of the physics in particular presents a Plato that is deeply coloured by the perception of the *Timaeus* that had already emerged in Theophrastus and would follow through to the Stoics. What it seems to lack is the kind of detailed reading of a passage that Posidonius was capable of during this period, interpreting Plato's words at *Timaeus* 35a–b against the background of Speusippus, Xenocrates and Crantor (F141a = Plutarch, *de Animae Procreatione* 1023b–d) and also against that of like-by-like cognition among the Presocratics (F85 = Sextus, *Adv. Math.* 7.93). He also made much of the wording of *Phaedrus* 245c5 (F290 Hermias, *in Phdr.* ad loc.), arguing that Plato was only arguing for the immortality of soul as a whole. We are unable to say whether Posidonius' work did or did not antedate the exchange between Antiochus and Philo, for he lived on until 51 BCE, but the very general accounts of Plato in the *Academica* seem not to be influenced by the new attention to detail.

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44 Plato seldom espouses definite doctrines in the account of philosophers' disagreements at *Ac.* 2.116–43; he "thinks" (*censet*, 2.118) that an everlasting world is made by god from all-receptive matter; "certain persons believe" that Plato is saying the view that the earth rather than the stars revolve, but fails to say it clearly (2.123); it pleased (*placuit*, 2.124) Plato that the soul had three parts. In ethics not a single Platonic doctrine is mentioned, though it is implied that his moral goal is related both to knowledge and to unchanging unity (2.129). In logic only that he wanted every criterion of truth to belong to the mind rather than to opinion or the senses (2.143).

45 See esp. Sedley (2012), 101–3 and Dillon (2003), 168–76.

As for Cicero himself he knew a great deal of Posidonius, but he may not necessarily be familiar with anything from late in his life, just as he shows little awareness of the activities of persons like Andronicus of Rhodes or Aenesidemus the re-founder of Pyrrhonist skepticism. In his *de Re Publica* and *de Legibus* he follows Plato's example in following his *Republic* with his *Laws*, and there are plenty of other suggestions of influence, but never of such a kind as to constrain his own thinking, which was based on his own distinctively Roman experience. Close study of his translation of the *Timaeus* shows us both that he is capable of a close reading, and that this reading is coloured by his view of Plato overall. At last we can say that the reception of Plato involves hermeneutics. Renaud's treatment tackles not only Cicero's reception of the *Timaeus* in detail, but also his reception of the *Gorgias*, in which his own expertise in public oratory would clearly influence his reading of Plato's text. At the conclusion of his chapter he gives grounds for thinking that with his *Timaeus* Cicero is already on the verge of what we think of as "Middle Platonism': the principal subject of Part II of this volume.

CHAPTER 1

Speusippus and Xenocrates on the Pursuit and Ends of Philosophy

Phillip Sidney Horky

I Introduction

The educational and institutional structure of the Academy after Plato's death is one of the great unknowns in the history of ancient philosophy.[1] Harold Cherniss, who thought the answer might lie in the educational curriculum outlined in *Republic* VII, dubbed it the great "riddle of the early Academy";[2] contrariwise, in considering the external evidence provided by Plato's students and contemporaries, John Dillon speaks of a "fairly distinctive, though still quite open-ended, intellectual tradition."[3] One would think, especially given the extent of Plato's discussion of the problem of educational and institutional structures (not to mention the pedagogic journey of the individual teacher and student) that those figures who took over supervision of the Academy after Plato's death – notably his polymath nephew Speusippus of Athens and his popular and brilliant student Xenocrates of Chalcedon[4] – would have devoted some attention to this issue of educational theory and practice in their writings. After all, several pseudepigraphical texts that are usually considered to have been written in the Academy and were ascribed to Plato – *Theages, Alcibiades I* (if inauthentic), *Alcibiades II*, *Epinomis*, *Rival Lovers*, *On Virtue*, the *Seventh Letter* – do, indeed, devote significant space to elaborating pedagogical methods, practices,

1 Special thanks are owed to Mauro Bonazzi, Giulia De Cesaris, and David Sedley, each of whom read this piece with care and attention. I cannot promise to have responded sufficiently to their challenges in all circumstances, but I can say with confidence that this paper is much improved owing to their critical acumen. Throughout this essay, I refer to Isnardi Parente's (1980) and (2012) editions and translations of Speusippus and Xenocrates with the second edition revised by Dorandi. I often consulted Tarán's edition and commentary of Speusippus as well (1981).

2 Cherniss (1945), 66–72.

3 Dillon (2003), 29.

4 Unfortunately, space does not permit treatment of Polemo or Crates, the scholarchs who followed after Speusippus and Xenocrates.

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and institutional structures, to say nothing of the problem of the possibility of knowledge.[5] One might go so far as to say that the early reception of Plato involved, at a high level of philosophical engagement, the reception of the theories of education and philosophical knowledge proffered by the great master.

If one were to examine the scholarship concerning those leaders of the Academy after Plato's death, she might conclude that they were *almost totally silent on* the theory and practice of philosophical education.[6] It's as if the scholarchs themselves simply weren't engaged in what pretty much *everyone* in the educational economy of 4th Century Athens was doing. What could explain this strange lacuna in the history of ancient philosophy? It is possible that this is nothing more than an accident of textual survival – there are several works attested for Speusippus and Xenocrates that deal with dialectic and definition, but few fragments of these works survive; or, alternatively, it is possible that the procedures involved in education within the Academy were simply taken over, without alteration, by Speusippus and Xenocrates, and that they simply followed whatever their teacher Plato, as the "architect of the sciences", had told them and practiced with them.

The former hypothesis brings the scholarchs of the Early Academy into fruitful discussion with Aristotle's writings on educational and scientific procedures, especially the *Topics*, as John Dillon has investigated to fruitful ends; and the latter hypothesis, too, has been used as an explanatory framework not only for the educational programme of the Academy, but also of the Lyceum. Either explanation can justifiably be inferred from the earliest and most important piece of external evidence regarding the philosophical activities of Plato and his students in the Early Academy, an extended fragment of the comedian Epicrates of Ambracia (a rough contemporary of Speusippus):

> F 11 Kock = Speusippus F 33 IP
>
> A: What are Plato and Speusippus and Menedemus up to? On what subjects are they discoursing these days (πρὸς τίσι νυνὶ διατρίβουσιν)?

5 I'm not even mentioning the other Socratic dialogues that demonstrate philosophical dialectic, perhaps for the sake of imitation by students. For a useful recent treatment of the Platonic Pseudepigrapha, see Brisson (2014), 11–17; a more penetrating assessment of how the *Alcibiades II* might represent Platonist work prior to the Sceptical Academy of Arcesilaus, see Tarrant (2015b).

6 For example, in his analysis of what philosophical activity looked like in the Early Academy, Berti (2010), 24–29 focuses not on Speusippus, but on Eudoxus and Archytas, neither of whom was a scholarch of the Academy after Plato's death. Similarly, Xenocrates is not discussed in this context.

What weighty idea, what line of argument is currently being investigated by them? Tell me these things accurately, in Earth's name, if you've come with any real knowledge of it.

B: Why yes, I can tell you about them clearly. For during the Panathenaea I saw a troop of lads in the exercise-grounds of the Academy, and heard arguments indescribable, ridiculous! For, in propounding definitions about nature (περὶ φύσεως ἀφοριζόμενοι), they were differentiating (διεχώριζον) the way of life of animals, the nature of trees, and the genera of vegetables. And in these arguments, they were investigating to what genus one should assign the pumpkin.

A: And what definition did they arrive at, and of what genus is the plant? Explain it to me, if you really know.

B: Well now, first of all they all took up their places, and with heads bowed they reflected (διεφρόντιζον) a long time. Then suddenly, while they were still bent low in study (ζητούντων), one of the lads said it was a round vegetable, another that it was a grass, another that it was a tree. When a doctor from Sicily heard this, he dismissed them contemptuously, as talking rubbish.

A: No doubt they got very angry at that, and protested against such insults? For it is unseemly to behave thus in discussions of this sort.

B: No, in fact the lads didn't seem to mind at all. And Plato, who was present, very mildly, and without irritation, enjoined (ἐπέταξ') them to try again [from the beginning] to define the genus to which the pumpkin belongs. And they started once again to attempt a division (διῄρουν). Dillon (trans.) (2003), 7–8, with alterations.

As Dillon has noted, regardless of any comedic bias, Epicrates' fragment demonstrates a remarkable understanding of philosophical activity and vocabulary.[7] Indeed, Epicrates' comic portrayal contributes significantly to our knowledge of (at least the contemporary public perception of) the intellectual activities undertaken in Plato's Academy. First of all, it demonstrates a kind of interdisciplinary and international character: the students' study of nature is taxonomic and focuses chiefly on division, but the participants in the discussion include a Sicilian doctor who, it is implied, is not a philosopher of the Academy. The interest in taxonomy reflects similar intellectual excursions by Italians not only in

7 Dillon (2003), 8. In this way, Epicrates follows Aristophanes, whose *Clouds* lampoons Socratic philosophy by appeal to technical concepts in Presocratic philosophy and Sophistic discourse. See Konstan (2010), 86–87, with bibliography, and Berti (2010), 22–23.

Plato's *Sophist* (animals at 221e–222d) and *Statesman* (animals at 262c–266a), where the Eleatic Stranger holds court, but also *Timaeus* (animals at 39e; trees and plants at 77a–b), voiced by the eponymous Locrian. Second, there is a specific focus on the patient character of the members of the Academy: neither Plato nor the students react harshly when confronted with the Sicilian doctor's contempt – this surprises speaker A and, it appears, serves the amusement of speaker B, who has characterized the sort of definitions they undertook to be "indescribable, ridiculous" (ἀφάτων ἀτόπων). Finally, speaker B's narrative emphasizes the authority of Plato over the scene: he makes a point of mentioning that Plato was present, and that the master calmly "enjoined" or "ordered" (ἐπέταξ') the students to give the proper *diaeresis* of the pumpkin a second try.

The possibility of knowledge, and pursuit of it in the natural world, are prevalent themes: notably, the fragment parodies the beginning of several Platonic dialogues, in which one figure seeks to know from another what happened at a particular gathering they attended, first hand, in the past.[8] Interestingly, this query takes the form of concern over certain knowledge: speaker A asks several times whether speaker B *really knows* (note the repetition of κατειδὼς; κάτοισθα τι) what Plato, Speusippus, and Menedemus have been discussing lately. Hence, this epistemic framework playfully informs the actors' curiosity about the Academic discussions involving knowledge and definition of objects in the natural world. Indeed, it is in the midst of differentiating the various βίοι of animals and the nature of trees that the subject of defining the pumpkin through differentiae arises.[9] There is an excellent parallel for this sort of research in Speusippus' *Divisions and Hypotheses Regarding Similar Things*, a text for which we have a relatively robust set of evidence (Frs 38–47 Isnardi Parente; also note Speusippus proclivity for differentiating substances and principles of things, including animals and plants, in Frs 48–55 and 123–46 Isnardi Parente).[10] Indeed, as we will see, Speusippus' approach to division and philosophical dialectic confirms the popular view that we find in Epicrates' comedy of Platonic philosophers engaged in enquiry (ζήτησις), while further contextualizing this activity.[11]

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8 Compare with *Symp.* 172a–174a, *Phd.* 57a–59d and *Parm.* 126a–127e.

9 In *Rep.* Plato had, of course, not only encouraged correct differentiation of the "lives" of the just and unjust men (e. g. 360e–363d), but also the various animal "lives" that people took up in the postmortem allotment in the myth of Er (617d–620d).

10 The title is attested at D.L. 4.5 = F 2 IP. It is difficult to know how, or whether, this text differed from other works for which we have titles, e. g. *On Typical Genera and Species* and *Definitions*, as noted by Falcon (2000), 410–11.

11 Falcon's (2000), 410 dismissal of the evidence from Epicrates contradicts itself: "Although this testimony is very curious, it can hardly be considered historical evidence about the activity of the members of the Academy. What we can infer from the fragment of Epicrates,

II Speusippus' *Mathematikos*: The Hunt for Knowledge

We can infer from several titles of lost works that Speusippus wrote much on the activity and character of the philosopher (*On Philosophy*, *The Philosopher*), and on how learning occurs (*The Mathematikos*, *Discussions on Similarities in Science*).[12] Although very few testimonia of Speusippus survive that describe his approach to learning, Proclus preserves important information in several passages within his *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements*, one of which describes the "hunt" for knowledge:

> Proclus, *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements* 179.14–22 (Friedlein = Speusippus F 35 Isnardi Parente)
>
> Principles must in every case be superior to what follows after them in simplicity, indemonstrability, and self-evidence. For generally, says Speusippus, of the things which thought (διάνοια) hunts after (τὴν θήραν ποιεῖται), some it [sc. thought] sets up (προβάλλει) and prepares for the coming enquiry (προευτρεπίζει πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν ζήτησιν) without having undertaken any sort of elaborate excursion, and it possesses a more vivid contact (ἐναργέστεραν ἐπαφήν) with these than sight has with visual objects; others it [sc. thought], because it is unable to grasp them immediately, attempts to hunt after by advancing on them step-by-step according to what follows after these [sc. principles].

Proclus goes on by giving examples from mathematics (179.22–80.22 Friedlein): the former kind of cognition, in which thinking simply *apprehends* its object, is exemplified by reference to the line that one draws from one point to another. The line is obtained through the "uniform flux" (τῇ ὁμαλῇ ῥύσει) that attends motion through a point, and hence, so claims Proclus, our thought grasps the line with ease.[13] The implication is that there cannot be a

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I think, is only that the practice of division was important in the Academy." If Epicrates' evidence is taken to show that the practice of division was important in the Academy, how could it *not* be considered historical evidence about the activity of the members of the Academy? Perhaps Falcon means that it should not be taken as historical evidence for Speusippus *in particular*; but in that circumstance, he would need to explain why such historical evidence for Speusippus practicing division as is collected by Isnardi Parente exists at all – especially given the fact that so much of Speusippus' work has been lost.

12 See D.L. 4.4–5 = F 2 IP. *Nine* books are attested for the latter work.

13 On the role of "uniform flux" in the "progression" of mathematical objects, see, inter alia, Cherniss (1944), 396–7 n.322.

mathematical *proof* of the line.[14] By contrast, the construction of a one-turn spiral, which requires construction of multiple geometric shapes and complex motions, cannot be successfully obtained through these simple epistemic operations. The latter activity requires "geometric" thinking. It appears that Speusippus was attempting to describe two functions or activities of "thought" (διάνοια), based on their objects: simple and indemonstrable mathematical objects such as lines are grasped through apprehension, and they are ontologically and logically prior to their consequents; they are principles of the latter.[15] Alternatively, complex geometrical objects, which require demonstration and depend upon simple mathematical objects for their construction, are posterior and must be discovered through the process of enquiry (ζήτησις), which requires multiple steps in the "hunt" for knowledge.

As has been noted, the appeal to the "hunt" for knowledge reflects Speusippus' reception and expansion of ideas found in Plato's dialogues.[16] In particular, we note that Speusippus bifurcates "thought" (διάνοια), as it is described in the Divided Line passage in *Republic* VI (509d–511e), according to simple or complex mathematical objects.[17] For Plato in the *Republic*, "thought" is the realm of the sciences and arts, which, according to Glaucon and Socrates, is comprehensible only through use of hypotheses as first principles, and not through exercise of their "intellect" (νοῦς): we may recall that Glaucon says of the people who study the sciences that they "are forced to observe them through thought, not perception; but on account of the fact that they undertake their examination not by returning to a principle but from hypotheses, they do not seem to you [sc. Socrates] to possess intellect (νοῦν οὐκ ἴσχεν)."[18]

14 Nothing in the fragment as it is preserved justifies Dillon's claim that "presumably what Speusippus is here asserting is the immediate apprehensibility of the basic principle that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points". Dillon (2003), 84 n.122. There is no propositional content in the testimonium as such.

15 Cf. Bonazzi (2015), 28–30.

16 The "hunt" metaphor refers to dialectical procedures in Plato's dialogues (*Phd.* 66a; *Tht.* 198a; *Plt.* 285d; *Sph.* 220b and 261a; *Phlb.* 65a). Cf. Dillon (2003), 84 n.121. Thanks to Giulia De Cesaris for reminding me of these intertexts.

17 Contra Tarán (1981), 430, who misinterprets by not acknowledging two diverse operations of διάνοια here based on diverse objects of its attention.

18 *Rep.* 511c7–d2. Whether or not Plato would claim that forms qua first principles are intuited, in the sense that scholars often take Aristotle to be eliciting when he speaks of νοῦς (*Analytica Posteriora* II.19), is beyond the scope of this paper. Be that as it may, Dillon's (2003), 85, ingenious comparison of the testimony on Speusippus with that passage of Aristotle is slightly misleading, for the simple reason that intuitive principles for Aristotle

Instead, so Glaucon says, "the state of specialists in geometry and such [sciences] you seem to me to refer to as "thought" and not intellect, since "thought" is something in between opinion and intellect."[19] In *Republic* VI, it is by no means obvious that when Socrates or Glaucon refer to "first principles", they are speaking about lines, or basic propositions about points relative to one another; they are referring to Forms. If Speusippus continued to retain the Platonic Forms for at least their explanatory function in his bid to, in the words of Dillon, "restructure" and "rationalize" them,[20] we would need to account for the fact that the Forms were unambiguously the unique first principles that could be grasped by "intellect" (νοῦς) in the *Republic*, whereas Speusippus only speaks of grasping first principles in one of the operations of "thought" (διάνοια).[21]

What Speusippus would have thought of the Platonic notion of the "intellect" (νοῦς), and its proper objects, is difficult to infer from his surviving fragments.[22] What is clear from what survives, however, is that Speusippus placed a lot of emphasis on the demonstrative aspect of learning that one employs in enquiry (ζήτησις). This is evident from a fragment of Eudemus, either built upon Aristotle's account in the *Posterior Analytics* (II. 13, 97a6–22 = F 39 Isnardi Parente)

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are obtained *via* νοῦς, whereas for Speusippus they are obtained through the simpler type of διάνοια. For Aristotle's view, also see *EN* VI.6–7, 1140b31–1141a20.

19 *Rep.* 511d3–5.

20 Dillon (2003), 49. I do not have space here to discuss Speusippus' rejection of the Forms, as asserted by Aristotle (*Metaph.* XIII.1, 1076a19–29 = F 74 IP; *Metaph.*VII.2, 1028b18–24 = F 48 IP) and effectively discussed by Berti (2010), 105–10. For further doubts about Dillon's hypothesis, see Bonazzi (2015), 13–14 with n.37.

21 It is worth noting, however, that Socrates in the Palinode (*Phdr.* 247c–d) does refer to the gods' observation of true being as involving "thought" (διάνοια) which is steered by "intellect" (νοῦς ὁ κυβερήτης).

22 An enigmatic doxographical statement by Aëtius (*De placitis reliquiae* 1.7.20 = F 89 IP) constitutes almost all we know about Speusippus' conceptualization of νοῦς, although it is unclear what exactly is being said there. A challenging testimonium by Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 7, 145–6 = F 34 IP), possibly taken over from Antiochus of Ascalon, differentiates among objects of knowledge the "intelligible" (τὰ νοητά) and "sensible" (τὰ αἰσθητά), the former of which is judged by "scientific reason" (ὁ ἐπιστημονικὸς λόγος), and the latter by "scientific perception" (ἡ ἐπιστημονικὴ αἴσθησις). The example that follows, however, chiefly explains how the latter participates in the former. We might infer from what Sextus says, however, that intelligibles would consist of mathematical properties such as "harmonious" and "non–harmonious". See Bonazzi (2015), 29 with n.83.

or deriving from Speusippus' own work,[23] that ascribes to Speusippus the claim that definition of a single definiendum is impossible without knowledge of everything:

> Anonymous Commentator on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* 584.17–585.2 (Wallies = F 39 Isnardi Parente)
>
> This doctrine is said by Eudemus to be that of Speusippus, that it is impossible to define any of the things that are without knowing all the things that are. And since it seems to bear some plausibility, [Aristotle] posits it. For the argument which he thinks can demonstrate this runs on the following lines: it is necessary for one who defines something to know its difference in relation to all things that are different from it. For, indeed, what *doesn't* differ in any way from something is the same as it; but what *does* differ is other. So, it is necessary for one who defines something as differing from other things to know its differentiae, those by which it differs from other things. For if someone doesn't know this, he will believe both that what is the same is other and what is other is the same. In this way, he will not state the essence that is proper to something; for if this should so happen, nothing prevents the definition produced from being common to some other things as well. But it's impossible to know something's difference in relation to certain [other] things without also knowing the things from which the proposed object differs. Therefore, it is necessary for one who defines something to know all things, for the one who defines is defining both this (for how [else] could he define it?) and all the things other than which it is itself defined as being other.[24]

It's difficult to extract from this passage what Speusippus' real project was in describing how one can and cannot obtain definitions of essences, although Eudemus implies that Speusippus preferred to define objects through arguments from identity and similarity over aliorelativity.[25] Importantly, however,

23 This is clear from the near-repetition of οὗ γὰρ μὴ διαφέρει, ταὐτον εἶναι τούτῳ, οὗ δὲ διαφέρει, ἕτερον τούτου (in Aristotle's) οὗ μὲν γὰρ μὴ διαφέρει τι, τούτῳ ταὐτόν ἐστιν, οὗ δὲ διαφέρει, ἕτερον (in the Anonymous Commentator's text, from Eudemus).

24 Thanks especially to David Sedley for suggestions on translating this challenging passage.

25 For "aliorelatives", I am referring to definitions posited πρὸς ἕτερον or πρὸς ἄλλα, as contrasted from definitions formed ταὐτον. Generally, on aliorelatives in Plato's philosophy, see Duncombe (2012).

Speusippus is not to be credited here with any sort of proto-sceptical argument that a regress implies that no essence can be known whatsoever;[26] rather, the claim could be used in to show that prenatal knowledge of all the essences is required for knowledge of any single essence, which can only, in fact, be obtained via discursive dialectic.[27] In this way, Speusippus could be seen to extend Plato's commitment to a theory of psychic recollection, as a response to Meno's worries about the possibility of knowledge and its transmission through education (*Meno* 80a–82a). Here we may recall Socrates' demonstration in the *Phaedo* that human beings must not only recollect the essence of the object under scrutiny, but also *all* the essences that may be considered relevant to it in a relation of similarity or difference (*Phd.* 72d–76e, especially 75b–76b).[28] Or we might recall the image in the *Phaedrus* (247c–e), in which the unmixed soul-chariot sometimes pauses at the edge of the universe and gazes upon the forms of justice, temperance, and knowledge – "the things that really are" (τὰ ὄντα ὄντως), which inhere in "real being" (οὐσία ὄντως οὖσα). Hence, for Plato, the soul's familiarity with the *all* the Forms of things is required for successful identification of *each* of them, and of each of the natural objects that imitate them, when incarnate, i. e. in a state in which essences have been forgotten.[29] Similarly, Speusippus looks to be adapting Plato's argument by stipulating that the mind must have had knowledge of all essences at some point in the past in order for it to successfully determine any one essence through dichotomous definition. This positive interpretation of the testimonia accounts for the differentiation of objects that require "enquiry" (ζήτησις), which are obtained through discursive thinking (and quite possibly interpersonal dialogue), and

26 Cf. Tarán (1981), 390.

27 Cf. *Plt.* 286a, describing the benefits of obtaining definitions through discussion: "That is why one must practice at being able to give and receive an account of each thing; for the things that are without body, which are finest and greatest, are shown clearly only by verbal means and by nothing else […]." (trans.) Rowe.

28 This is my understanding of the important passage at *Phd.* 76a1–4, which Sedley and Long translate: "Right, because this was shown to be possible: upon perceiving something – whether by seeing or hearing, or by some other perception of it – thanks to it, to come to think of something else which one had forgotten, something with which the first thing, though dissimilar, *had a connection*, or something to which it was similar" (italics mine). See the next note.

29 It is important to qualify this statement: I am not saying that at the moment of perceiving an object, the soul recollects *all* the essences *at once*; rather, at that very moment, the soul recollects those essences that are said to "consort" or "associate" with (ἐπλησίαζεν at *Phd.* 76a3) the object being perceived.

those objects that are grasped intuitively or, at the very least, more "easily";[30] it also helps to explain the fact that Speusippus did, indeed, attempt to make taxonomic definitions of various sorts of animals and plants in his fragments (see frr. 123–146 Isnardi Parente).[31]

The evidence discussed above shows that Speusippus was committed to developing theories of definitional dialectic that were focused on proper procedure, which could not proceed solely from aliorelatives if they were to obtain the proper essences of things. While he did reject the separate Forms that had grounded Plato's metaphysics, he nevertheless does not appear to have embraced the scepticism that has sometimes been associated with his epistemology. The evidence suggests that Speusippus' theory of education was focused primarily on the steps involved in scientific "enquiry" (ζήτησις), an activity that required multiple interlocutors working together in the hunt for knowledge. Hence, Speusippus adapted and extended what Plato had already described in several works, especially those dialogues composed later in life, to suit a project of scientific taxonomy. Despite the postulation of a robust axiomatic metaphysical-mathematical scheme (well-discussed by other scholars), there is no compelling evidence that Speusippus associated this scheme with learning itself; rather, it was preparation for the journey to come.

III Xenocrates on the Happy Man

If Speusippus focused on the correct procedures involved in the (re)discovery of knowledge, his successor to the Academy, Xenocrates, sought to explain *why* one should seek knowledge at all. Hence, Xenocrates was credited by philosophers and doxographers in the Hellenistic period with explaining the ends of philosophy. It is well known that Xenocrates' philosophy was, from Antiochus forward, strongly associated with Speusippus', but there remained some room for differentiation of their approaches to the unified system of Platonic philosophy. Consider, for example, Varro's account of Platonic philosophy in Cicero's *Academica Posteriora*:

> Cicero, *Academica Posteriora* 4.17 = Xenocrates T 82 IP^2 = Speusippus F 25 IP
>
> But by the authority of Plato, who was [a thinker] complex, manifold, and productive, a single univocal system of philosophy was founded – with

30 Aristotle, too, refers to pursuit of definitions through division and collection as occurring in διάνοια (*Metaph.* VI.4, 1027b25–1028a4).

31 For a brief treatment of Speusippus' method of division, see Berti (2010), 24.

> two names, Academics and Peripatetics, which, while agreeing in doctrines, differed in name. For although Plato had left Speusippus, his sister's son, as "heir", as it were, nevertheless two men of outstanding zeal and learning (*praestantissimos studio atque doctrina*), Xenocrates of Chalcedon and Aristotle of Stagira –[32] those who were with Aristotle were called "Peripatetics", because they conducted debates (*disputabant*) while walking around inside the Lyceum, but those who, according to the practice of Plato, assembled and customarily held discussions (*sermones*) in the Academy, which is another exercise-ground, obtained their appellation from the name of the place.

Interestingly, Varro's account presents Speusippus as a mere "heir" to Plato's doctrines, whereas he emphasizes the strong connections between Xenocrates and Aristotle, referring to them as *praestantissimi studio atque doctrina*. Their superiority with regard to *studium* and *doctrina* is emphasized by Varro, and they are juxtaposed with one another, leaving poor Speusippus out on his own.[33] There are also some implicit differences signalled by the language: philosophical engagement at Aristotle's Lyceum is taken to be more dialectical, with the emphasis on disputation (*disputabat*), whereas at Xenocrates' Academy it is more relaxed and conversational (*sermones*).[34]

Furthermore, Varro's emphasis on *studium* and *doctrina* is worth remarking on:[35] the latter, which would in Greek be διδασκαλία, indicates their pedagogical commitment to philosophy in its manifold univocality;[36] the former, however, is in some ways more interesting, since it indicates a deep commitment to the project of philosophy – we may here wish to recall that one of Cicero's calques for φιλόσοφος is *studiosus sapientiae* (*Tusc. Disp.* 5.9; also see *Tusc. Disp.* 1.1, on φιλοσοφία), a term that is difficult to translate back into Greek from Latin. It is not a direct transliteration of Greek φιλοσοφία, which

32 The grammar is unclear here, as there is no stated main verb.

33 Contrast, for example, Piso's description of Antiochus' view at *De fin.* 5.7, in which Aristotle is rendered the *princeps* over Speusippus, Xenocrates, Polemo, and Crantor as a group (i. e. the *peripatetici*).

34 Compare Epicrates' description above of the activity in the Academy as "discoursing" (διατρίβουσιν).

35 The coupling of *studium* with *doctrina* in Cicero is not rare, occurring at, e. g. *De or.* 1.11 and 3.230 (where it appears alongside *ingenium* and *memoria*); *Brutus* 240 (coupled with *industria* and *labor*); and *De senectute* 49.

36 Blank (2012), 259–60 notes that one important difference between Piso and Varro's positions is that the latter believes that virtue is implanted by instruction (*doctrina*), whereas the latter assumed that virtue could not be fully achieved without it.

Cicero certainly could have advanced (e. g. at *Laws* 1.59, φιλοσοφία is literally rendered as *amor sapientiae*).[37] The term *studiosus*, and its abstract form *studium*, are more nuanced, implying a kind of commitment to enquiry and scientific dedication that are not indicated by the literal translation of φιλία into *amor*. It is difficult to infer a direct Greek cognate in Cicero's own works. One possibility might be to associate *studium* with ὄρεξις, which would conform with other Platonist definitions of φιλοσοφία as an ὄρεξις σοφίας, *vel sim*.[38] The problem here is that there is no easy cognate that follows for *studiosus*,[39] and ὄρεξις does not do the work of explaining the sustained commitment to wisdom implied by the term *studium*. Another possibility, this time arising out of the Stoic world, is ἄσκησις: after all, we have it on the authority of Aëtius that they understood φιλοσοφία to be the ἄσκησις ἐπιτηδείου τέχνης, or, as Long and Sedley translate, "the practice of expertise in utility."[40] This possibility has the value of retaining the close connections between the Xenocratean and the Stoic division of philosophy into physics, ethics, and logic.[41] But, again, the Stoic philosopher is not anywhere (to my knowledge) called an ἀσκητὸς τῆς σοφίας, or anything like it.

Another possibility that, I think, holds more traction for our understanding of Varro's philosopher as a *studiosus* who is committed to his *studium*, is attested in the medieval translation tradition of Aristotle's *Topics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, extending from Boethius to Thomas Aquinas, where we consistently see the terms *studiosus* and *studium* used to translate σπουδαίος and σπουδή, respectively.[42] For Aristotle, the term σπουδαίος plays an important role in his definition of human happiness, the supreme good that is indicated by appeal to the function of a human being, in the famous "function argument":

37 My discussion here has benefited from Baraz (2012), 96–112.

38 E. g. Alcinous *Did.* 1, 152.2; also see the Platonist *Definitions* 414b: φιλοσοφία τῆς τῶν ὄντων ἀεὶ ἐπιστήμης ὄρεξις; and Iamblichus *Protrepticus* 5, 26.4–5 Pistelli: ἡ δὲ φιλοσοφία ὄρεξίς ἐστι καὶ κτῆσις ἐπιστήμης.

39 I am not aware of any examples of the philosopher being described as ὀρεκτικὸς σοφίας.

40 Aët. 1, Preface 2 = L&S 26A = *SVF* 2.35.

41 Cf. Dillon (2003), 138–42.

42 Boethius *ap. Aristoteles Latinus* V.1, 39.23–40.1 Mino-Paluello, translating Aristotle *Top.* II.6 below; the author of the "ethica nova", often thought to be Burgundio of Pisa, *ap.* AL XXVI.1, translating Aristotle *EN* I.7, 78.3–12 Gauthier; William of Moerbeke, following the author of the "ethica nova" in, *ap. Aristoteles Latinus* XXVI.3, translating *EN* I.7, 384.4–11 Gauthier; for Thomas Aquinas, see *Summa Theologica* 1 a1, 6, where the *virtuosus* is differentiated from the *studiosus* because the latter requires *studium ad doctrinam* in order to make judgments, whereas the former grasps principles *ex revelatione*.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7, 1098a7–18

If the function of the human being is activity of soul in accordance with reason, or not apart from reason, and the function, we say, of a given sort of practitioner and a *serious* (σπουδαίος)[43] practitioner of that sort is generically the same, as for example in the case of a cithara-player and a *serious* (σπουδαίος) cithara-player, and this is so without qualification in all cases, when a difference in respect of excellence is added to the function (or what belongs to the citharist is to play the cithara, to the *serious* (σπουδαίος) citharist to play it *well* (τὸ [κιθαρίζειν] εὖ)) – if all this is so, and a human being's function we posit as being a kind of life, and this life as being activity of soul and actions accompanied by reason, and it belongs to a *serious* man (σπουδαῖος) to perform these well and finely (εὖ καὶ καλῶς), and each thing is completed well when it possesses its proper excellence (ἕκαστον δ'εὖ κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρετὴν ἀποτελεῖται): if all this is so, the human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with excellence (and if there are more excellences than one, in accordance with the best and most complete). (trans.) Rowe, with minor alterations

Aristotle has already argued (at 1097b22–1098a7) that the function of the human being is the activity of its soul in accordance with reason; but here he adds that there is an important difference between the function of *any* human being and the human function that is most complete and best, which is exemplified by the serious (σπουδαῖος) practitioner of any art, i. e. the one who practices his art in accordance with the excellence/virtue that is proper to him "well" (εὖ).[44] Near the end of *Nicomachean Ethics* (X.6, 1177a1–2), when laying the ground for his final description of happiness being the fully contemplative life, Aristotle is more to the point: the happy life is what is in accordance with virtue (κατ' ἀρετήν), i. e. that which is conducted "with seriousness" (μετὰ σπουδῆς).

43 I translate σπουδαῖος with "serious" rather than "good", although Aristotle does routinely contrast σπουδαῖος with φαῦλος (e. g. at *EN* II.4, 1105b30 and III.6, 1113a25). But he also contrasts it with γελοῖος at *EN* X.7–8, 1177a2–5, again in the context of discussing the happy life and happiness. Consider Finnis' (1998), 48 description of a *studiosus*, by reference to its use in Thomas Aquinas: "*Studiosus* is simply a translation handed to Aquinas for Aristotle's keyword *spoudaios*, the serious, morally weighty, mature person whose views and conduct deserve to be taken seriously–the right-minded person."

44 Generally, on the "function argument", see Barney (2008).

Interestingly, Aristotle's focus on the virtuous life lived seriously reflects broader eudaimonistic traditions found in the Early Academy: indeed, we are led to believe that Xenocrates advanced similar arguments, as Aristotle himself suggests:

> Aristotle, *Topics* II.6, 112a32–38 = Xenocrates F 154 Isnardi Parente[2]
>
> Another method of attack is to refer a term back to its root meaning … Similarly, "happy" (εὐδαίμων) can be used of one whose spirit is serious (ὁ δαίμων σπουδαῖος), as Xenocrates says that "he who possesses a soul that is serious is happy (εὐδαίμονα εἶναι τὸν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχοντα σπουδαίαν); for this [sc. the soul] of each man is a spirit." (trans.) Horky

Later on, Aristotle explains that by referring to the "happy" life as that which is psychologically "serious", Xenocrates was committed to the idea that the "serious" life is that which is "most choiceworthy of all lives", and that what is choiceworthy is the same thing as what is greatest.[45] Hence, so goes the implication,[46] the happiest life, which is the most choiceworthy and hence greatest, is the life that is "serious". "Serious" in what sense? Obviously Xenocrates was equivocating the meanings of "well" (εὖ) and "serious" (σπουδαῖος) with reference to the activities of the soul, which is, or is at least similar to, a *daemon*.[47] Perhaps he does this in service of an argument relating the proper end of human life with the practise of virtue.[48] Unfortunately, beyond this, no other substantive evidence survives, but it would not be unreasonable to assume that

45 *Top.* VII.1, 152a5–30 = Xenocrates F 158 IP[2].

46 Note that Aristotle refers to Xenocrates' activity here as an ἀποδεῖξις (καθάπερ Ξενοκράτης τὸν εὐδαίμονα βίον καὶ τὸν σπουδαῖον ἀποδείκνυσι τὸν αὐτόν κτλ.). Just as we saw above with Speusippus, the argument, though obscured by Aristotle's summarizing, is conducted from similars, rather than from aliorelatives.

47 It is interesting to consider Boethius' translation here, which fails to retain the etymologization of "happy" (εὐδαίμων) into "good-δαίμων" in replacing the term δαίμων with *fortuna*: *similiter autem et bene fortunatam, cuius fuerit fortuna studiosa, quemadmodum Xenocrates dicit bene fortunatum esse qui animam habet studiosam*. On soul as δαίμων in Xenocrates, see Dillon (2003), 146–9.

48 This would help to explain Cicero's claim that the happiest life is the one practised *in virtute* (*Tusc. Disp.* V.51 = Xenocrates F 161 IP[2]), or Clement of Alexandria's claim that "Xenocrates of Chalcedon argued that happiness is the 'possession of proper virtue and the capacity subservient to it' (κτῆσις τῆς οἰκείας ἀρετῆς καὶ ὑπερετικῆς αὐτῇ δυνάμεως) and that the 'parts' of the virtues are 'fine deeds and serious dispositions, as well as states, motions, and arrangements'" (*Strom.* II.22 = Xenocrates F 150 IP[2]).

Aristotle's elaborate theory of the "serious" man, which was fundamental to his celebrated function argument, was actually indebted to, if not based on, arguments advanced by his competitor Xenocrates concerning intellectual seriousness and commitment to philosophical enquiry.

About the ends of philosophical enquiry according to Xenocrates we are better informed: Pseudo-Galen tells us that Xenocrates believed that the "cause of the discovery of philosophy is putting an end to the confusions of things in [one's] life" (αἰτία δὲ φιλοσοφίας εὑρέσεώς ἐστι … τὸ ταραχῶδες ἐν τῷ βίῳ καταπαῦσαι τῶν πραγμάτων).[49] It is worth comparing this with Speusippus' definition of happiness (εὐδαιμονία) as "a habit perfected in reference to what accords with nature" (ἕξιν … τελείαν ἐν τοῖς κατὰ φύσιν ἔχουσιν) and something at which "good people aim for freedom from disturbance" (στοχάζεσθαι … τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς τῆς ἀοχλησίας).[50] Xenocrates' final cause for the human discovery of philosophy was the arresting of "confusions of things" in life, a phrase whose difficulty to interpret is evident: does Xenocrates reject, as Isnardi Parente takes him to,[51] Aristotle's famous claim that the origin of philosophy is intellectual wonder (διὰ τὸ θαυμάζειν), followed by perplexity (ἀπορῶν) and then the desire to escape ignorance (διὰ τὸ φεύγειν τὴν ἄγνοιαν), in favour of a pre-Hellenistic theory of the pacification and removal of disturbed emotions?[52] I suspect Xenocrates is more ambivalent here, with a phrase that accounts for both the contemplative and the practical lives, both of which are part of embodied existence.[53] When describing σοφία *simpliciter*, for example, Xenocrates referred to the "science of first causes and of the intelligible substance" (ἐπιστήμη τῶν πρώτων αἰτίων καὶ τῆς νοητῆς οὐσίας), whereas φρόνησις was "double, both practical and theoretical, the latter of which is *human* σοφία".[54] Theoretical knowledge, then, could be applied to human life, just as practical knowledge, and it would involve inquiry into the causes of *human* (rather than divine) knowledge. The remarkable use of the term ταραχῶδες, however, also indicates a movement in the direction of developing a technical language for what will become a fundamental problem for Epicurean, Stoic, and Platonist philosophers of the Hellenistic Era.

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49 Ps-Galen, *Historia philosophica* 6, p. 605 Diels = Xenocrates F 171 IP².

50 Clement, *Strom.* II.22 = Speusippus F 101 IP.

51 Isnardi Parente and Dorandi (2012), 330.

52 *Metaph.* I.2, 982b11–21.

53 It is worth noting that if Xenocrates is rejecting the claim that philosophy started with intellectual wonder, he would be disagreeing with Socrates in Plato's *Tht.* 155d.

54 Clement, Strom. II.5 = Xenocrates F 177 IP². This point is emphasized by Dillon (2003), 150–51.

IV Conclusion

If indeed it is the case that, as scholars since Cherniss have maintained, the activities of the Early Academy can be inferred from the educational programme laid out in Plato's own dialogues, there is a need to consider how its scholarchs Speusippus and Xenocrates, who no doubt continued (in some way) the intellectual practices that were established by their master Plato, reacted to Plato's own commitments to learning, educational practice, and the pursuit of knowledge, as preserved in the dialogues. This essay has only been able to scratch the surface in terms of its approach to educational theory and practice in the Early Academy – to focus primarily on the theoretical and epistemological paradigms advanced by the scholarchs which might have informed their conduct of the "school". Several aspects are prominent: first, it emerges that interpersonal philosophical engagement is thought to be more "conversational" and less adversarial than might have occurred, for instance, in Aristotle's Lyceum. This might be a function of the strong Peripatetic commitments to, and formulation of, endoxastic enquiry and dialectical practice.[55] Second, the extant evidence shows a focus on the sort of enquiry (ζήτησις) that is directed towards studying the natural world through dichotomous division – a sort of application of the definitional procedures practised by the Eleatic Stranger in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman* to the topics discussed by Timaeus of Locri in the *Timaeus*. But grounding this zetetic approach was a positive epistemology ultimately assumed from Socratic debates in the *Republic*, *Meno*, and *Phaedo*: it is as if Socrates was the "mouthpiece" for metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, whereas the scholarchs turned to the natural illustrations and explanations of the Eleatic Stranger (definitional) and Timaeus of Locri (cosmological) for the procedures and subject areas relevant to education. Interestingly, despite apparent differences in their approaches to the Forms and/or ultimate *explanantia*, Speusippus and Xenocrates appear to have had compatible approaches to philosophical enquiry and its ends – so far as the evidence suggests, the pursuit and ends of philosophy were apparently the same for both Plato's innovative nephew and his most ardent defender. It is possible, but by no means absolutely certain, that the ideal of "freedom from disturbance" had pre-Platonic roots;[56]

55 One wonders how polyvalent a notion of "dialectic" could have been in Xenocrates' day, when he and Aristotle pursued what appear to be kindred, but not identical, approaches to this issue.

56 Isnardi Parente and Dorandi (2012), 330 associate this ideal with Democritus and Nausiphanes (cf. DK 68 B 4 = DK 75 B 3), but the original source, Clement of Alexandria

regardless, it was never so effectively integrated into philosophical education until it became philosophy's *purpose* under the first scholarchs of the Early Academy, Speusippus and Xenocrates. Hence, in their approach to ethics, the first scholarchs both departed from their great master and expressed a view that competed against that of his most famous student.

(*Strom.* II.130), is not obviously drawing the exact same association. For a valuable attempt to trace out the relationship between Democritus, Nausiphanes, and Epicurus, see Warren (2002), 169–81 (although he does not mention Xenocrates there).

CHAPTER 2

The Influence of the Platonic Dialogues on Stoic Ethics from Zeno to Panaetius of Rhodes[1]

Francesca Alesse

In order to delineate and understand the reception of Plato's thought and work in early and middle Stoicism, it is necessary to make two preliminary observations. The first is that Stoic philosophy is strongly anti-Platonic in its metaphysical, psychological and epistemological foundations. Stoicism puts forth a materialistic monism based upon the principle according to which the corporeal alone exists because it alone "acts and is acted upon".[2] Stoic ontology is monistic and materialistic, openly and explicitly opposed to the Platonic. As a consequence of this ontology, Stoicism considers the human soul, in all its cognitive and moral faculties, as corporeal,[3] as well as the divinity itself.[4] The divinity is defined as the active principle (*poioun*) that generates and pervades nature, remaining immanently present in it for the whole duration of cosmic cycle.[5] From the logical and epistemological viewpoint, Stoicism holds an empirical and sensualistic theory of truth that denies any kind of existence, separate or immanent, to universal notions, reducing them to mental entities (*ennoemata*).[6] On the psychological and anthropological plane finally, early Stoicism holds a kind of psychological monism allowing for distinct psychological and physical functions but no distinction between the rational and desiring soul,[7] regarding instead passion, initially considered a vice, as a mistaken

1 I sincerely wish to thank Harold Tarrant and François Renaud who have revised the first version of my contribution, and Danielle Layne for reviewing the final version.

2 Cf. *SVF* I 85–96 and II 357–68; on the principle that there exists only what acts or is acted upon, cf. especially D.L. 7.34 (*SVF* I 85) and Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* VIII 263 (*SVF* II 363). It is apparently an echo of the principle embodied in the "sons of the earth" in the famous passage in *Sph.* 247d10–e4.

3 Cf. *SVF* I 135, 137; *SVF* II 790–800.

4 Cf. *SVF* I 528–36 and *SVF* II 1049–56.

5 D.L. 7.147. On the cosmos' transformative cycles, cf. *SVF* I 98 and 102; on conflagration, *SVF* II 596–632.

6 Cf. *SVF* I 65, I 494; II 378.

7 Cf. *SVF* II 823, 827, 828; but above all 879–85.

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judgment (*krisis*) produced by corrupted reason.[8] These "anti-Platonic" features of Stoic thought vary in degree according to the Stoic thinker concerned and evolve in the course of time while remaining in outline distinctive tenets of the school.

The second preliminary consideration to bear in mind is that the Platonic dialogues tend to center upon the character of Socrates as protagonist[9] and, indeed for Stoic ethics, Socrates was a fundamental authority. This is abundantly documented by the biographical tradition pertaining to Zeno of Citium (whose conversion to philosophy appears to be due to the reading of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and to the knowledge of Socrates' teaching),[10] from the anecdotal literature, but also by several testimonies regarding the Stoic works and ethical doctrines that refer to various aspects of the so-called "Socratic writings" (*logoi sokratikoi*).[11] The "Socratic writings" in the 4th century represented a genuine literary genre, comprising works primarily written in dialogue form (but also as memoirs and sometimes as "apologies", i. e. judicial speeches in defense of Socrates). The followers of Socrates' teaching who gave life to this literary genre included Antisthenes of Athens, Aeschines of Sphettus, Xenophon, Phaedo of Elis, Euclides of Megara and, of course, Plato. Several of these authors founded schools or gave life to new ways of thinking and living which exercised a remarkable intellectual influence on subsequent generations and transmitted the Socratic teaching and some interpretation of it to

8 Cf. especially *SVF* I 208 and 209 (on Zeno the testimonies do not all cohere concerning the definition of *pathos* as *krisis*), and *SVF* III 378, 381, 456, 459, 461, 462. Moreover, in *SVF* II 885, 888, 895 and 906 we have testimony for Chrysippus' polemic against Platonic psychology. See the recent collection of studies on various topics in Long (2013).

9 With the sole exception of the *Leg.*, in which Socrates is absent and of those dialogues in which he is not the protagonist (*Plt.*, *Sph.*, *Tim.*).

10 Cf. D.L. 7. 2-4 = *SVF* I 41 = *SSR* V H 38. The young Zeno is the author of a work entitled *Memories of Crates*, modelled on Xenophon's *Memorabilia*; cf. D.L. 6.91–2 = *SVF* I 272 = *SSR* V H 40. Another biographical note indicates that Zeno might have read already in youth "Socratic books", cf. D.L. VII 32 = *SVF* I 6 = *SSR* V H 37.

11 Socratic literature constitutes a vast and complex cultural phenomenon, linked to the fact that Socrates was recognized as a teacher of various schools of thought, dialectical and moral in orientation, which explicitly come back to his teaching and which spread through a vast literary production. On the so-called Socratic schools and the *logoi sokratikoi*, cf. above all Giannantoni (1990) [= *SSR*], the systematic collection of sources with historiographical contextualisation; for surveys and collections of essays, see Giannantoni and Narcy (1997), Romeyer-Dherbey and Gourinat (2001), Rossetti and Stavru (2010).

the Hellenistic period.[12] An important role was played by Diogenes of Sinope, regarded by modern commentators as a disciple of Antisthenes of Athens and as the founder of Cynicism, a cultural movement that, through Diogenes himself and his pupil Crates of Thebes, appears to have played a decisive role in the emergence of Stoicism. Indeed it has been believed for a long time that Stoicism had incorporated Socratic teachings primarily, if not exclusively, through Cynicism.[13] However, more recent studies have laid bare the knowledge Stoics had of works by other Socratics, such as Aeschines and Phaedo.[14] These studies have shown above all that some Platonic dialogues had a profound influence on Stoic ethics and on the Stoic reception of Socratic teaching:

1. The *Protagoras* with regard to the doctrine of the unity of the virtues and reciprocal relation between the particular virtues;
2. The *Laches*, like the *Protagoras*, for the definition of courage as a model of definition of virtue in terms of the science of the good and bad;
3. The *Euthydemus*, and to some extent the *Meno*, for the key role attributed to wisdom (*phronesis*) and to the idea that human happiness consists not in the possession of material and external goods but in their use (*chreia*) under the guidance of wisdom;
4. The *Gorgias* for the doctrine of the threefold division of good, bad and "intermediary" things, which in Stoic ethics will become the famous theory of virtue, vice, and the "indifferents".[15]

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12 A recent survey about Socratics and the philosophical relevance of theirs teaching is in Zilioli (2015). A short but very learned contribution on the influence of Socrates on Stoics is Brown (2009).

13 This view emerged either from the doxographic view that made Stoicism go back directly to Cynicism above all through the discipleship of Zeno with the Cynic Crates of Thebes (cf. D.L. 6.91–92 = *SSR* V H 40 = *SVF* I 272; VII 1–3 = *SSR* V H 38 = *SVF* I 1; VI 105 = *SSR* V H 37; VII 24 = *SSR* V H 38), or from the *Quellenforschung* on Xenophon, regarded in turn as an authority for the first Stoic teachers. Xenophon's work was considered the key link between Socrates and Stoicism. Furthermore, philology between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries regarded Xenophon's work as strongly influenced by Antisthenes' writings; on that basis the conclusion that the Stoics, through the reading of Xenophon relying on Antisthenes, represented an expression of the assumed line of continuity between Socrates and Cynicism. See the importance given precisely to this question in Goulet-Cazé (2003) and, regarding the role played by Antisthenes in the criticism of Platonic idealism, Brancacci (2005).

14 Cf. Rossetti (1980) and Rossetti (1984).

15 Cf. Long (1988) and Long (2002). Cf. also Alesse (2000), esp. 293–309. On the relationship between Socratic literature, especially Platonic, and Stoic ethics see Bénatouïl

We can therefore suppose early Stoics read and cited in their writings various Platonic dialogues, mainly drawing from them what, in their eyes, appeared to be the core of Socrates' moral teaching. This core can be succinctly characterized in the three following conceptions: (i) the definition of moral virtue as the science or knowledge of good and bad; (ii) the thesis of the unity of the virtues according to which someone who demonstrates one particular virtue really possesses them all; and (iii) the thesis that things commonly considered good and bad are in reality neither good nor bad but rather "neutral" or, to use the Stoic technical term, "indifferent" (*adiaphora*), on the ground that there exists nothing good and nothing bad except moral virtue and vice, and that these consist in the agent's intellectual disposition and intention.[16]

Before analyzing in detail the most significant cases of reception of the Platonic writings on the part of early Stoicism (the doctrine of the unity of the virtues and that of the theory of the "intermediaries"), one must at least mention two other dialogues (although remote from other influential dialogues with respect to chronology and content) that have exercised a strong influence on Stoic epistemology, cosmology and theology: the *Theaetetus* and *Timaeus*. As for the *Theaetetus*, modern interpreters have seen, in its analysis of perceptual error and the famous metaphor of the soul as a wax tablet (191a–196c), a strong influence on Stoic sensualist epistemology as well as on the doctrine of cataleptic representation.[17] The *Timaeus*, which had an extraordinary reception during the imperial Age and in late antiquity, is to a large extent the source of the Stoic conception of divinity on account of the two most significant aspects of the dialogue's cosmogonic section: the demiurge and the world soul. Early Stoicism's view of divinity fuses two functions which Plato had assigned separately to the demiurge and to the world soul, the principle of order in the world. The Stoic divinity is indeed an active principle and the maker of nature, while being at the same time a diffuse entity present throughout nature.[18] It thus unites in itself

(2006); on the relationship between Socratic literature and Stoic political philosophy, see Vogt (2008), and Bees (2011).

16 It is necessary to recall that many other Socratic-Platonic ideas and themes can be found in the testimonies of Stoicism, but they cannot be properly developed here. Among the most important ones, it is worth recalling that of "self-knowledge", itself linked to the theme of the *daimonion*, and that of *eros* as philosophical education. Recent surveys can be found in Remes and Sihvola (2008) and Johnson and Tarrant (2012).

17 I refer to the studies of Ioppolo (1986), Long (2006), 223–35 and Togni (2013), 163–186.

18 Cf. D.L. 7.147: Θεόν [...] εἶναι δὲ τὸν μὲν δημιουργὸν τῶν ὅλων καὶ ὥσπερ πατέρα πάντων κοινῶς τε καὶ τὸ μέρος αὐτοῦ τὸ διῆκον διὰ πάντων. Cf. *Tim.* 37c7 and esp. 41a6 (ἐγὼ δημιουργὸς πατήρ τε ἔργων).

the demiurgic and the dynamic functions which Plato had kept distinct, making the world soul a "creature" of the demiurge, and so posterior to it. For the Stoics, however, the god is a demiurgic principle, unalterable and exempt from the process of conflagration, while being itself "cosmic soul" pervading nature in its totality. This is a conceptual change of great historical importance which helps Stoicism to make the *Timaeus* into a cosmological and theological text of paradigmatic significance for late Hellenistic thought and the imperial Age.[19]

The influence of the *Timaeus* is probably responsible also for the Stoic theory of the "seminal reasons" (*logoi spermatikoi*), that is intelligible forms which have no existence outside bodies except in the divine mind at the time of the periodic destruction of the world.[20] Located in the mind of god, seminal reasons are inalterable and allow for the construction of a new world identical to the preceding one. This doctrine may have been inspired by *Tim.* 30b6–31b3. There the topic expounded by Plato, the inclusion of all the intelligible forms in their complete nature (*panteles zoon* or "the complete Living Thing", trans. Zeyl), leads to the view that the physical world as a copy of the intelligible one is equally complete and so the only one. Just as the Platonic demiurge becomes, in Stoic theology, one and the same with the world soul, it becomes one and the same with the intelligible "living thing", that is the world of ideas which, from the Stoic immanent perspective, is transformed into the content of the divine mind. Thus the Stoic reception of the *Timaeus* can be regarded as a case of "appropriation" of Platonism within a substantially anti-Platonic context. This appropriation will give rise to a remarkable contribution to the survival of Platonism and to its capacity to prevail in the imperial age.

The reference to Platonic texts, especially in ethics, persists in Stoicism from the second to the 1st century BCE. Antipater of Tarsus explicitly referred to Plato in a treatise in three books written in defense of the identity of the noble (*kalon*) and the good (*agathon*), in which this Stoic figure demonstrated that virtue is the sufficient condition to happiness.[21] The Stoic doctrine of

19 Regarding the fusion of the role of the demiurge and that of the world soul, we can find traces of it in Cicero, *De Nat. De.* II 81–88 and *Tusc. Disp.* I 87–88, a fusion sometime thought to be the work of Posidonius. But there are reasons to believe this appropriation goes back to early Stoicism. There are now many studies demonstrating the dependence of Stoic cosmogony and theology upon *Tim.*, at least in the sense of a development of the themes of the demiurge and of the world soul; amongst the most important, see Krämer (1971), 120–26; Reydams-Schils (1999), 41–116; Sedley (2002), Long (2010), 37–53; Powers (2013), 713–22.

20 Cf. *SVF* I 98; *SVF* II 580; 1027.

21 *SVF* III Antip. 56.

the identity of moral virtue and happiness, which is abundantly documented from Zeno on, also finds support in the Platonic dialogues according to Antipater. We can suppose that he thought he could find the principle of the identity between *kalon* and *agathon* and that of the self-sufficiency of happiness in texts such as *Euthydemus* 280d–e and *Meno* 88c, according to the line of continuity assumed in the Stoic reception of Socratic-Platonic ethics. With Panaetius of Rhodes, however, the Stoic reception of Plato poses new problems for us. The thought and work of Panaetius have long been considered very significant for the question of the relation between Stoicism and Platonism in the late Hellenistic period. Indeed important doctrinal changes have been attributed to this Stoic figure, characterized by a strong sympathy for Platonism. Many objections, however, have been raised to this reconstruction, and attempts have been made to relocate him in the mainstream of "orthodox" Stoicism, significantly reducing or even eliminating the influence of Platonism on his thought.[22] Whatever is the correct interpretation of Panaetius' views, it is worth keeping in mind that he was reputed by authors coming shortly after him, such as Cicero and Philodemus, as an admirer of Plato and as a Stoic who would have "made many concessions" to both the Academy and the Peripatos.[23] This posthumous characterization of Panaetius in the course of the late Hellenistic period, immediately following the publication of his work, indicates that he moved away from the alleged rigidity of early Stoicism[24] in favor of a conciliatory position with other schools of thought. Whether this interpretation of Panaetius' immediate successors is correct and faithful to the philosopher's thought, or rather a distortion of it, is difficult to say. The Platonic text that has most influenced Panaetius' thinking was probably the *Republic*. As far as we may deduce, from the first two books of Cicero's *De officiis*, concerning Panaetius' own treatise "On duties", there were traces of references to Plato's political dialogues, first of all in the description of the four cardinal virtues (illustrated in *De off.* I 11–14) as natural propensities necessary to education. We know that Panaetius held the view, common in the school, that the moral end is life according to nature, with the specification, however, that human nature is characterized by four spontaneous

22 For a survey of the various hermeneutical tendencies, see Alesse (2015).

23 Cf. Philodemus, *Index Stoicorum* (PHerc. 1018), col. LXI 14 = test. 1 Alesse; and Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* I 79 = test. 120 Alesse, in which a disagreement between Panaetius and Plato is testified as an unusual occurrence (*credamus igitur Panaetio a Platone suo dissentienti? quem enim omnibus locis divinum, quem sapientissimum, quem sanctissimum, quem Homerum philosophorum*).

24 In connection with this view, see Cicero, *De fin.* IV 79 = test. 79 Alesse.

propensities and inclinations toward virtue.[25] These inclinations are likely to be those described in detailed manner by Cicero, and these present many common features with the virtues of the "philosophical nature" described in the *Republic*. For example, the phrase *cupiditas veri videndi* (the desire to see truth) in *De off.* I 13 refers to *Rep.* 475b–d, where the *philosophos* is said to be an ἐπιθυμητὴς σοφίας ("a lover of learning") and φιλοθεάμων ἀληθείας ("one who loves the sight of truth"). The words *verum naturae hominis aptissimum* ("what is true is most appropriate to human nature"), also in *De off.* I 13, need to be compared with the adjectives συγγενές, οἰκεῖον, οἰκειότερον ("akin", "belonging", "most belonging to") used by Plato to describe the relation between the philosopher and the truth in *Rep.* 485c6–10. In the parallel passage in *De officiis* (II 46), the words *vana falsa fallentia odimus* ("we hate what is deceptive, false and misleading", trans. R. Woolf) should be compared to τὸ ψεῦδος μισεῖν ("to hate what is false") in *Rep.* 485c3–4. These can be thought to go back to Panaetius or suggested by his work. Moreover, *humanarum rerum contemptio* ("disdain for human things") can be linked to μέγα τι δοκεῖν εἶναι τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον ("[will he] consider human life to be something important?", trans. Grube and Reeve) in *Rep.* 486a9–10. The importance of this description and of its Platonic antecedents is best understood in the light of another thesis defended in some Platonic dialogues and which Panaetius drew upon to illustrate his conception of the moral end: the thesis that wisdom consists in "doing one's own things" (*ta heauta prattein*). This principle is, as we know, expounded in the *Charmides* (161b), as an expression of Critias' view (and in general of the traditional aristocratic culture) with the aim to define temperance or the virtue of sensible behavior (*sophrosyne*). In that dialogue Socrates examines this principle in detail, pointing out its problematic aspects with regard to the notions of wisdom and knowledge. Despite the aporetic outcome of the discussion, the *Charmides* puts in sharp focus, precisely through the analysis of the principle "doing one's own things", another fundamental notion of Socratic teaching as well as an important element of reception in late Hellenistic period, namely the notion of *self-knowledge*. Self-knowledge is the necessary presupposition which confers to the principle of "doing one's own things" a decisively greater philosophical significance to it than the formula had in traditional culture. Whether self-knowledge is understood as knowledge of one's role and one's station in society and the world, or as knowledge of one's individual moral nature, or again as knowledge of one's own authentic essence,

25 Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* II 21, p. 183 Stählin; Stobaeus, *Ecl.* II 63.10–64.12 Wachsmuth-Hense; Stobaeus, *Ecl.* II 62.7–14 W.-H. = test. 53, 54, 57 Alesse.

that is in the metaphysical sense, self-knowledge is the condition that legitimates the norm of minding one's own business. In the *Republic* Plato employs, in a non-aporetic and decisively positive manner, the principle of "doing one's own things" as definition of justice and so giving to it a more firmly political profile.

Panaetius' theory of the moral end remains substantially linked to the rational nature of human beings, which he associates with the inquiry into the individual self and the natural inclination which an individual has towards a certain virtue and kinds of behavior.[26] We know from various sources that he conferred a special significance on individual nature, which remains the principal criterion for choosing the right action: each human being is like an archer facing a multicolored target and who must hit one color only.[27] However, it is the use Plato makes of the theme "doing one's own things" in the *Republic*, and not merely the *Charmides*, that leaves its normative imprint to the principle itself and establishes a relation between a person's "duty" and their nature, which one may recognize in oneself.[28] In other words, the Platonic use of "doing one's own things" in the *Republic* does not only confer on nature broadly understood a general normative value, but on individual nature a specific one. And this is why Panaetius, who pays much attention to the individual, finds fundamental support in Plato's work.

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26 Cf. Cicero, *De off.* I 110–11 (*Admodum autem tenenda sunt sua cuique, non vitiosa, sed tamen propria, quo facilius, decorum illud, quod quaerimus, retineatur. Sic enim est faciendum, ut contra universam naturam nihil contendamus, ea tamen conservata propriam nostram sequamur, ut etiamsi sint alia graviora atque meliora, tamen nos studia nostra nostrae naturae regula metiamur; neque enim attinet naturae repugnare nec quicquam sequi, quod adsequi non queas. ex quo magis emergit quale sit decorum illud, ideo quia nihil decet invita Minerva, ut aiunt, id est adversante et repugnante natura.Omnino si quicquam est decorum, nihil est profecto magis quam aequabilitas* [*cum*] *universae vitae, tum singularum actionum, quam conservare non possis, si aliorum naturam imitans, omittas tuam. Ut enim sermone eo debemus uti, qui notus est nobis, ne, ut quidam, Graeca verba inculcantes iure optimo rideamur, sic in actiones omnemque vitam nullam discrepantiam conferre debemus*); Cicero, *De off.* I 112, where the role of the individual character is illustrated by the classical comparison between Ajax and Odysseus.

27 See Stobaeus, *Ecl.* II 63.10–64.12 = test. 54 Alesse.

28 In this connection see *Rep.* 433a4–6: ἐθέμεθα δὲ δήπου καὶ πολλάκις ἐλέγομεν, εἰ μέμνησαι, ὅτι ἕνα ἕκαστον ἓν δέοι ἐπιτηδεύειν τῶν περὶ τὴν πόλιν, εἰς ὃ αὐτοῦ ἡ φύσις ἐπιτηδειοτάτη πεφυκυῖα εἴη ("We stated, and often repeated, if you remember, that everyone must practice one of the occupations in the city for which he is naturally best suited", trans. Grube and Reeve), which indicates the normative role conferred on nature and more specifically on individual nature in Plato.

Let us now proceed to a more detailed analysis of texts and doctrines indicative of the Stoic reception of the Platonic dialogues. In so doing, it is necessary first of all to recall that Stoicism holds the Socratic identity between virtue and the knowledge of good and bad, and that the identity thesis is understood and applied by the Stoics to all particular virtues, both primary and subordinate.[29] The identity of moral virtue with knowledge logically implies the thesis of the unity of the virtues, even though this thesis is not understood in the same manner by the Stoics.[30] Indeed sources inform us that Aristo of Chios held the thesis of the unity of the particular virtues in a stricter sense, so much so that his position is sometime presented as a form of nominalism (the particular virtues are only various names of the one virtue),[31] an interpretation that is probably inaccurate. Chrysippus for the most part offered a greater differentiation of the particular virtues,[32] to which he provided as a counterpart the theory of "interconnectedness" (*antakolouthia*) of the virtues, the principle according to which it is impossible to practice a particular virtue without possessing the whole of virtue.[33] This complex doctrine can claim a specific Platonic text of reference: *Prot.* 329c–332a.

In this section of the dialogue Socrates and Protagoras discuss the question whether individual virtues are only various names (*onomata*) of a single virtue or parts (*moria*) of it. As Protagoras rejects the suggestion that the particulars virtues are mere names, Socrates asks him whether these parts, which must be identified with the individual virtues, are to be understood as homogeneous elements (as fragments of these) or as functions distinct from one another (such as parts of the face). This section of the dialogue formulates and develops those two principal themes pertaining to the nature of virtue which will later be subjected to analysis and debate within the Stoic school: (i) the rejection of "nominalism" and (ii) the question whether the particular virtues are distinct from one another on account of the corresponding disposition, as fragments of gold are different by the position and framework in which they find themselves in nature, or rather because each one of them has a specific function and quality, as the parts of the face. We have testimony for these two options in the case of Zeno and Aristo of Chios (D.L. 7.161) and Chrysippus (Plutarch, *De virt.*

29 Cf. esp. Stobaeus, *Ecl.* II 74.15ff. Wachsmuth-Hense.

30 Cf. Plutarch, *De virt. mor.* 441a = *SVF* III 255; Plutarch, *De stoic. rep.* 1034c–e = *SVF* I 200; Galen, *PHP* VII 2, 434 De Lacy = *SVF* I 374, III 256, 259.

31 Cf. Plutarch and Galen in *SVF* I 200 and 374; D.L. 7.161.

32 Cf. Plutarch, *De virt. mor.* 441b.

33 Cf. D.L. 7.125 = *SVF* II 295; Plutarch, *De stoic. rep.* 1046e = *SVF* III 299; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* II 18, 154 Stählin = *SVF* III 275.

mor. 441b) respectively. More specifically, the Chrysippean thesis that each virtue is different by its own distinctive quality (Plutarch, *loc. cit.*: Χρύσιππος δὲ κατὰ τὸν ποιὸν ἀρετὴν ἰδίᾳ ποιότητι συνίστασθαι νομίζων) echoes Socrates' words in *Prot.* 330a4: according to the view expressed by Protagoras in response to Socrates' questions, each particular virtue has a specific faculty (δύναμιν αὐτῶν ἕκαστον ἰδίαν ἔχει). And this leads to the aporetic conclusion that the virtues can conflict with one another (*Prot.* 331a–b), which Chrysippus could interpret as the consequence not of the idea that each virtue has its own quality, but of the idea that a human being can possess one virtue and not another. Thus the Chrysippean solution is a clear criticism of what Plato has Protagoras say (and not Socrates), and consists in adopting the formulation of *Prot.* 329e4: ἐάνπερ τις ἓν (scil. μόριον ἀρετῆς) λάβῃ, ἅπαντα ἔχειν ("or do you necessarily have all the parts if you have any one of them?", trans. Lombardo and Bell), to make it into the formula of his doctrine of the interconnectedness of the virtues: τὰς δ' ἀρετὰς λέγουσιν ἀνταϰολουθεῖν ἀλλήλαις ϰαὶ τὸν μίαν ἔχοντα πάσας ἔχειν ("They hold that the virtues involve one another and that the possessor of one is the possessor of all", trans. Hicks).[34]

The exact reference to the *Protagoras* might therefore reveal the intention to adhere to the true Socratic teaching and not to the Platonic text. In addition to the *Protagoras*, the *Laches* (esp. 196d sq., 199c7–d1) may also have contributed to the idea that the unity of the particular virtues depends upon the fact that virtue is knowledge of good and bad, namely by raising doubts about the thesis according to which courage is science of the fearsome, which is already granted in the *Protagoras*. Indeed the courageous cannot not possess self-control, justice and holiness. The *Laches* confirms the conception that the unity of the particular virtues consists in their simultaneous presence in the virtuous' soul. The Stoics' confidence in this principle allows them to extend the structure of the Socratic-Platonic definition of courage to the entire catalogue of virtues.[35]

Thus we can say the same about the other fundamental connection of Stoic ethics with views found in the Platonic dialogues, namely the one linking the famous Stoic theory of the threefold division of good, bad and indifferent things to its Socratic-Platonic background.[36] This doctrine finds a preparatory basis in *Gorgias* 467e–468b,[37] where Socrates in conversation with Polus tries

34 D.L. 7.125, which attributes this formula explicitly to Chrysippus.

35 Cf. for instance the catalogues reported in *SVF* III 262, 264, 266, 267, 269, 274.

36 Cf. *SVF* I 190–8 and III 117–23.

37 This passage has been an object of reflection in the post-Platonic and Hellenistic epoch, cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* XI 3–5, from which one can deduce that the ancient Academy also admitted a class of things neither good nor bad.

to demonstrate the difference between "doing what one wants" and "doing what seems best", and comes to identify a class of "intermediary" things as a logical consequence of the idea that moral goodness is not a characteristic of things but that is derived from their "participation" (*methexis*) in the nature of virtue. This idea will be developed by Stoicism into the thesis that these things are "indifferent" (*adiaphora*), devoid of intrinsic moral value, and that they become good or bad through the agent's virtuous or vicious disposition and in the use he makes of material and external "goods". These are "intermediates" because they are, as it were, "neutral" and equidistant, in themselves, from the good or bad use one can make of them. The "intermediates" will become, in Stoic terminology, "indifferent", that is devoid of the specific difference characteristic of virtue or vice. The *Gorgias* passage, in particular 467e6–468a1, is important also on account of the subtle distinction between "intermediate" (*metaxu*) and "neutral" or "neither good nor bad" (*oudeteron*): things "intermediate" by their nature become sometimes good or bad through participation, sometimes they are such as to remain neither good nor bad (τὰ δὲ μήτε ἀγαθὰ μήτε κακὰ ἆρα τοιάδε λέγεις, ἃ ἐνίοτε μὲν μετέχει τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ἐνίοτε δὲ τοῦ κακοῦ, ἐνίοτε δὲ οὐδετέρου, οἷον καθῆσθαι καὶ βαδίζειν, 467e6–468a2; "[and by things] which are neither good nor bad you mean things which sometimes partake of what's good, sometimes of what's bad, and sometimes of neither, such as sitting or walking [...]?" trans. Zeyl). The Stoics (with the exception of Aristo of Chios) will divide the "indifferents" in "preferables", "non-preferables", and "neither preferables nor non-preferables" (*oudetera*)[38] therein providing a criterion guiding action conforming to nature and above all to right reason and wisdom. The *Euthydemus* too, as A.A. Long showed,[39] played an important role in the Stoic notion of the "indifferent". In 282d2–e5 Socrates puts forth the idea that the same things are good and advantageous if guided by knowledge, bad and damaging if guided by ignorance. Even what is commonly considered a good becomes an evil greater than its contrary if it is not accompanied by *phronesis*. The moral attitude of the agent determines the value of things, which in themselves are neither good nor bad. It can be argued that the reasoning advanced in the *Euthydemus* has influenced Stoic ethics, if one considers the doxography in D.L. 7.103: "they say that what can be used (*chrêsthai*) [both] well and badly is not good" (trans. Inwood & Gerson). The verb *chrêsthai* referring to the *adiaphora* is consistent with the *Euthydemus* passage (cf. 280d6).

38 Cf. *SVF* I 192 and 193; III 127–39. On the position of Aristo di Chios, see *SVF* I 360, 361 and 367.

39 Long (1988), esp. 164.

Also advocating the hypothesis that these Platonic texts have played an important role in the formation of the Stoic doctrine of the "indifferents", is the fact that Plato, through the separation between what is good by itself and what is good with a view to something, clarifies a difference which will prove fundamental for early Stoic ethics, namely the difference between the subjective and intentional aspect of action and the content of the action itself. The recognition of an "intermediate" category and the specification that the "intermediate" things can be good or bad through the use we make of them, implies that everything that appears good or bad to common sense and to the commonly held opinions is in reality "neutral", devoid of intrinsic value, because the agent's disposition alone is good or bad. When the Stoics define each particular virtue as knowledge of good and bad proper to a certain domain of action and moreover as knowledge of what is neither good nor bad in the same domain of action, they demonstrate they have put into practice a strategy of cultural appropriation of specific aspects of Platonism and of some Platonic texts, even though these aspects are understood by the early Stoics primarily as testimonies of the teaching of Socrates.

The careful Stoic appropriation of the Platonic Socrates, along with their interest in the organic universe and its governance in the *Timaeus*, would have lasting effects on the reception of Plato. It could be seen as crucial for Antiochus of Ascalon's attempt to see Stoics and Platonists as close allies early in the first century BCE, enabled Posidonius to make a substantial contribution to the exegesis of soul in the *Timaeus*, and ensured that Stoics and Platonists would enter into fertile dialogue in the period leading up to Plotinus, in whom respectful criticism of the Stoics often provides a launching-pad for fertile meditation upon the central issues of philosophy. And of course the mining of relatively early Platonic dialogues as a source for the true Socrates is not without its modern parallels.

CHAPTER 3

Plato and the Freedom of the New Academy

Charles E. Snyder

I Introduction

Scholars of Greek and Roman antiquity advance a variety of reasons to explain why the study of Hellenistic philosophy remains dependent on fragments and testimonies. Mansfeld observes such dependence in his use of the premise that philosophers of late antiquity based philosophical instruction and school curricula on a core set of writings from the classical period.[1] On this basis, Mansfeld infers that schools of late antiquity continually transcribed and preserved writings of instructional significance. The schools routinely excluded other classical and Hellenistic writings from the curricula, thus ensuring that a sizable body of literature deemed less pedagogically significant would perish, along with the original material on which the inscriptions had been made.

Plato's dialogues survived more or less intact, and the recovery in the early first century BCE of a substantial portion of Aristotle's philosophical treatises would stimulate the later development of exegetical commentaries. The writings of Plato and Aristotle soon began to emerge as an essential component of school instruction. P. Hadot associates the rising industry of commentary literature on Plato and Aristotle with a much earlier exodus of philosophical schools from Athens after Sulla's siege of the city in 87 BCE.[2] Without an intellectual metropolis of live interaction, Hadot believes that a scattering of philosophical groups around the Mediterranean promoted an unprecedented immersion in the canonical texts of school founders. Philosophical instruction embraced the enterprise of textual exegesis as commentaries became an instrument of choice for the new disciples of Plato and Aristotle to supersede the materialistic tendencies of Hellenistic thought.[3] Thus polemical and fragmentary testimonies preserved Hellenistic doctrines in an epitomized and fossilized form.

The plot thickens with Sedley's identification of another contributing factor. Disciples of the Hellenistic schools were the first philosophers to have been brought up speaking Koine Greek, a simplified version of Plato's

1 Mansfield (1999), 3.

2 P. Hadot (1987), 14–15.

3 See Donini (1994), 5033–35.

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and Aristotle's classical Attic.[4] Their Attic prose became difficult to read and interpret on purely linguistic grounds. With Hellenistic writings disseminating original philosophical doctrines and arguments in a common dialect, loyal successors of Plato and Aristotle far removed from a metropolis of live interaction felt compelled to modernize and defend systematic interpretations of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. The copious handbooks and treatises of the Hellenistic schools gradually became defunct.

The main problem with this standard survey of reasons is that it fails to explain why we remain extraordinarily dependent on peripheral sources and later testimonies in studying the Hellenistic Academy. Unlike the principal philosophers of the Stoic and Epicurean schools, two leading luminaries of the Academy in the Hellenistic period deliberately left successors nothing of their own writing to study, or rely on, as sources for philosophical instruction. Arcesilaus, head of the Academy from 261 to 240 BCE, was the first major philosopher of the Hellenistic period to decide not to write philosophical books (D.L. 4.32). Carneades, head of the Academy from 166 until 137 BCE, followed the example of Arcesilaus in exactly this respect. The decision not to write while living a philosophical life within the Academy, and the repetition of that decision by Carneades over a century later, is the fundamental reason for our dependence on secondary sources for the Hellenistic Academy. A comprehensive study of Hellenistic philosophy remains incomplete without an examination of this Academic refusal to write. Moreover, the same can be said for a systematic account of the reception of Plato in antiquity. Given that Arcesilaus and Carneades continued Plato's philosophical legacy without writing a philosophical work of any kind, the deliberate refusal of writing must be a consequence of a certain reception of Plato's philosophy in the Hellenistic period.

II A New Academy

Arcesilaus declined to follow the lead of his lover Crantor in writing commentaries on specific Platonic dialogues.[5] Ancient sources suggest that he devoted his inquiries to cross-examining the beliefs of his interlocutors (*De fin.* 2.2), while "not showing what he thought" (Cicero, *De orat.* 3.67). His inquiries are modelled on what Cicero describes as Socrates' "many-sided manner"

4 Sedley (1997), 112–16.

5 Philodemus (*Index Academicorum* 18.34–40) and Diogenes Laertius (D.L. 4.32) report that Arcesilaus had been "caught out" editing or revising the works of Crantor.

(*multiplex ratio*, *Tusc. Disp.* 5.11) of arguing against all the opinions affirmed in a cross-examination. Arcesilaus apparently reversed himself repeatedly in oral arguments, "decapitating" or "severing" his earlier arguments into conflicting theses, like a many-headed Hydra (Eusebius, *PE* 14.6). Combine such testimony with the fact that Plato's dialogues begin to present themselves as conveying a complete philosophical system only in the first century BCE,[6] and it begins to seem unlikely that Arcesilaus would have defended a systematic interpretation of Plato's writings.

This many-sided manner of argument instigated the later characterizations of Arcesilaus and his school as "ephectic" (i.e., suspensive) or "skeptic" (i.e., investigative), terms Sextus Empiricus deployed centuries later to designate Pyrrhonian philosophy. In so far as the terms connote an inquirer's epistemic restraint in admitting ignorance about any given topic of investigation, then the characterizations are accurate descriptions of Arcesilaus' cross-examinations.[7] For instance, the ordinary Greek term *skepsis* means "inquiry" or "search", and it appears regularly in Plato in this ordinary sense.[8] However, both terms acquire a technical meaning in Sextus Empiricus to describe an "ability" to generate suspension of belief shadowed by psychological tranquillity (*PH* 1.8). Arcesilaus never officially endorsed this technical meaning as a description of his inquiries, a meaning which has no inherent connection to the interpersonal cross-examinations carried out by Socrates in Plato's dialogues. If we continue to characterize Arcesilaus as a "skeptic", we should be mindful that a particular manner of searching for the truth associated with Socrates and Plato originally motivated Arcesilaus' style of cross-examination. Attending to this influence will keep scholars from assimilating Arcesilaus' style of argument with modes of argument that, detached from cross-examination, aim at psychological tranquillity. Cicero is a more trustworthy source on Arcesilaus' cross-examinations than the partisan Sextus

6 The systematization of Plato's thought began with his immediate successors, Speusippus and Xenocrates, but in being sustained by an oral tradition of research in communication with Plato, Speusippus and Xenocrates developed positions that diverged from what can be found in the dialogues. See Reale (1987), 94–122 and Dillon (2003), 16–155.

7 For the heterodox view that we ought to avoid using the concept of "skepticism" in characterizing the Hellenistic Academy, see Lévy (2006), 448–9.

8 In *Tht.*, e.g., Plato often uses the aorist infinitive, aorist imperative, aorist subjunctive, and future variants of the present middle/passive infinitive σκέπτεσθαι (144d9, 144e3, 145b3, 147a1, 148e2, 154e8, 157d3, 161d4, 165a4) to refer to Socrates' mode of "cooperative inquiry" (κοινῇ σκεψώμεθα, 151e5). These verbal derivatives show that for Plato *skepsis* has no semantic affiliation with Sextus Empiricus' technical usage.

Empiricus, for he has a more adequate view of the Socratic style shaping the debates between Academics and Stoic philosophers in the Hellenistic period, and the way those debates evolved to generate the criticism that a "new" Academy abandoned the authority of Plato's system.

Cicero invariably rejects Antiochus' polemical denomination of a "new" Academy and the discontinuity thesis it entails.[9] The distinction between an "old" and "new" Academy appears to have been introduced by Antiochus in the early first century BCE, a former disciple of Philo of Larissa who sought to reclaim the "authority of the ancients" (*Ac.* 2.13–18). To Antiochus, Plato's doctrinal philosophy is the "authority" that even early Peripatetics and Zeno principally observe. Antiochus accused Arcesilaus, and his successors down to Philo of Larissa, of subverting Plato's authority and rupturing the continuity of Academic teaching from Plato to Polemo. However, in declaring his allegiance to the Academy in a less polemical context, Cicero typically avoids Antiochus' polemical denomination of a "new" Academy, referring his loyalties to an Academic tradition (*De nat de.* 1.11, *Tusc. Disp.* 2.4, *De off.* 2.8, *Ac.* 2.7), without any sense of an alleged rupture or subversion. Rarely does Cicero in his own voice allude or refer to a "new" or "most up-to-date" Academy, but on the very few occasions that he does (*Ac.* 1.46, *Ac.* 1.13), we find Cicero making polemical use of his own continuity thesis. In this context, Cicero appropriates the epithet of a "new" Academy in order to reduce what is "new" about the Academy to mere emendation, and thus defend the continuity of the school that in his mind still represents the "noblest and most ancient philosophy" (*De. off.* 2.8).

Arcesilaus' reliance on oral argument in turn led his contemporary, the Stoic Aristo of Chios, to satirize Arcesilaus by likening him to a chimaera (D.L. 4.33, Sextus Empiricus, *PH* 1.234, cf. Augustine, *Acad.* 3.17.38). But again it would take nearly two centuries for the accusation to arise that Arcesilaus deviated from an earlier phase of the school in which a Platonic system of doctrine had been continuously taught by Plato and his successors. Cicero counters Antiochus by situating his own idea of a "new" or "more recent" Academy within a three-stage genealogy of increasing self-consciousness (*Ac.* 1.44, 46). In arguing for the continuity of Academic tradition, Cicero situates his own writing within a tradition that reaches back to Plato and beyond. Stage one

9 Later variations on Antiochus' initial distinction emerge in Sextus Empricus (*PH* 1.220): Arcesilaus established the Middle Academy (cf. D.L. 4.28) and Carneades the New Academy (D.L. 4.28), Philo and Charmadas inaugurating a Fourth Academy, and Antiochus a Fifth. Cicero and his contemporaries only seem to recognize, or debate the existence of, an Old and a New Academy.

consists of expressions of uncertainty among Presocratic philosophers, while stage two involves the more self-conscious ignorance of Socrates and Plato, whose dialogues approve of Socrates' ignorance (*Ac.* 2.72–74). Cicero boasts of his intimacy with Socrates and Plato: "Can I speak more certainly about anyone? Indeed, I seem to have lived with them." Cicero's rapport with Socrates leads him to proclaim that "Socrates thought that nothing could be known for certain," and his familiarity with Plato also yields the grand synthesis of the next stage. In stage three, Arcesilaus expresses even more awareness of uncertainty than Socrates (*Ac.* 1.45), and his revival of Socrates' manner of argument is construed as continuous with the following features of Plato's dialogues. Cicero writes, "(1) nothing is affirmed, (2) many arguments are given on either side, (3) everything is under investigation, (4) and nothing is claimed to be certain" (*Ac.* 1.46). Note that stage three is not direct evidence of Arcesilaus' explicit comparison to Socrates; nor does stage two present Arcesilaus' reading of Plato's dialogues. Readers of Cicero encounter his view of the Academy's consistent evolution. With this view Cicero attempts to uphold the continuity of the school and consummate by means of his own writing "the most correct and improved" Academy (*Ac.* 1.13). Indeed, Cicero's elaborate genealogy stems from his aspiration to preserve what he takes to be the authority of an Academic reception of Plato from Arcesilaus to himself. Such a reception is meant to displace Antiochus' assertion of Plato's authoritative system of doctrine. Now that Antiochus has made such a defense an issue, it is up to Cicero to envisage how Arcesilaus would have defended an alternative conception of Plato's authority, even though Cicero also happens to be aware that Arcesilaus' oral method kept him from officially affirming such a view.

III From Polemo to Arcesilaus

Arcesilaus studied for a short time with Theophrastus in the Peripatetic school. As a young man he left the school for Polemo's Academy soon after meeting the Academic Crantor (*Index Ac.* 19.15, D.L. 4.29–30). Though an erotic relationship with Crantor may have been one motive for joining the Academy, it was unlikely his only motive. It seems that Arcesilaus "at a young age" (*Index Ac.* 19.15) also admired Plato's dialogues and acquired a personal copy of his writings. He also expressed admiration for Polemo and Crates, referring to them as "gods or remnants of the golden race" (*Index Ac.* 15.3, D.L. 4.22). As Polemo's disciple, Arcesilaus lived and studied in close proximity with Crantor and Crates for more than twenty years before his promotion as scholarch.

Long argues that Polemo already began to stress the "Socratic side of Plato."[10] Little is known of Polemo outside anecdotes about his philosophical life, since his writings have not been preserved. But ancient biographical sources attest that Polemo promoted a culture of philosophical instruction in which *erôs* brought colleagues together in close physical proximity. Polemo is reported to have loved his teacher and predecessor Xenocrates, emulating the scholar in all respects (D.L. 4.19). But after Xenocrates' death, Polemo's affections attach to the younger Crates, his favorite disciple, with whom he shared all life's activities (D.L. 4.21). Attention has been drawn to the link between Polemonian Academic culture and a growing interest in the archetype of an erotic and divinely-inspired Socrates in *Theaetetus*, *Alcibiades* I, and *Theages*.[11] Living amid an erotic culture of instruction and physical proximity for nearly two decades before becoming scholarch, surely it is not a surprise to encounter Philodemus' testimony that Arcesilaus "at first defended an orientation maintained by the school from Plato and Speusippus until Polemo" (*Index Ac.* 18.7, cf. Cicero, *De orat.* 3.67 De fin. 5.94). Regrettably the next several lines of Philodemus' text are lacunose, making it difficult to read what might be a report of Arcesilaus' later deviation.[12]

Diogenes Laertius suggests that Arcesilaus may have deviated from Polemo and his Academic predecessors (D.L. 4.28). By conducting a "more contentious" method of inquiry, Arcesilaus appears to have been "the first to stir up the discourse handed down by Plato." Diogenes' report is consistent with what all of our ancient sources indicate – that Arcesilaus rigorously disputed the "cataleptic impression" introduced by Zeno of Citium (*Ac.* 2.77).[13] For Zeno, a former disciple of Polemo before setting up a Stoic school, cataleptic impressions deliver the criterion of knowledge and virtue, such that it would be foolish to withhold rational assent to the clarity and distinctness of true impressions. Zeno's philosopher progresses to wisdom by mastering the activity of assenting to true impressions, advancing from the cognition of particular impressions to a firm and infallible disposition of systematic wisdom (D.L. 7.47, *Ac.* 1.41–42, 2.77). But what if one could show Zeno, or adherents of Zeno's doctrine, through dialectical argument the impossibility of distinguishing true from false impressions? What would follow for Zeno's conception of the philosophical path to wisdom?

10 Long (1986), 159.

11 Tarrant (2005).

12 See Dorandi (1991), 152–53, 59–62.

13 For the view that Arcesilaus' method aimed at benefitting rather than merely refuting his interlocutors, including the followers of Zeno, see Snyder (2014), 343–5, 354–61.

For the sake of examining those who posited Zeno's criterion, Arcesilaus granted the premise that a sage would not err in assenting to an impression unless that impression could be proven true. After arguing against Zeno's proof for the existence of true impressions, Arcesilaus deduced that the sage would encounter nothing to rationally warrant assent. The sage would therefore have to "suspend judgment about everything." Surely Zeno's novel account of wisdom contributed to the appearance of Arcesilaus' "more contentious" manner of disputation. This contentiousness does not entail, however, that prior to Arcesilaus' alleged deviation there had been no pre-existing dispute between Polemo and Zeno. To measure the extent to which Arcesilaus was "more contentious" than his Academic predecessors, one must first recognize a pre-existing dispute between Polemo and his former disciple.

Sedley claims that Polemo and Zeno argued over different methods of philosophical instruction.[14] The disagreement turned on Zeno's ethical doctrine of "appropriate actions" (*kathêkonta*). An "appropriate action," according to Zeno, is "that which when done admits of a reasonable defense" (D.L. 7.107). Such actions correspond to formalized and verbalized precepts (Cicero, *De off.* 1.6.60, Seneca, *Ep*. 94–95, esp. 94.33–37) that function as guidelines for action in particular circumstances. Executing these precepts consistently determines true philosophical progress (Seneca, *Ep.* 94.18–19). Writing near the end of the first century BCE, an anonymous commentator on Plato's *Tht.* alludes to a rival notion of *kathêkonta* that repeals the requisite formalization of rules. The commentator writes: "The proem includes a *display* or *sketch* of appropriate actions which the Stoics call *kathêkonta*" (4.17–23). In referring to a dramatic display or sketch in Plato's dialogues, one may wonder whether the commentator is the first to call into question Zeno's requirement of formalized precepts or theorems for progress in philosophical instruction.

In summarizing three ways of reading Plato's proems advocated by "the ancients" (*in Parm.* I 658.33, *in Tim.* I 16.6–12), Proclus identifies an "ancient" ethical reading of the dialogues.[15] As Sedley explains, on one occasion Proclus' discussion of Plato's proems precedes an obscure reference to a criticism of the proems composed by Theophrastus (*in Parm.* 659.14–17). Given that Theophrastus' dialogues had been almost totally forgotten in Proclus' day, the criticism suggests that Proclus made use of an ancient source not only for his familiarity

14 Sedley (1999b).

15 The three ways include (1) a view advocated by Middle Platonists (Severus), which holds that one should not comment on the proem, but simply take it as read, (2) an ethical interpretation later supported by Porphyry, (3) and a metaphysical interpretation later upheld by Iamblichus.

with competing "ancient" views on Plato's dialogues (including those of Theophrastus), but also for his acquaintance with a debate within Polemo's Academy.

Evidently Polemo rejected Zeno's unmitigated trust in the means of formal dialectical theorizing for ethical progress (D.L. 4.18). Instead, Polemo advocated learning through action and the emulation of a teacher, two elements of philosophical progress that turn up again in the ancient discussion of Plato's proems. It so happens that Crantor, Polemo's disciple and the first exegete of Plato's dialogues (*in Tim.* I 76.1), commented on the proem in the *Timaeus*. Polemo's preoccupation with ethics, his rejection of dialectical theorizing as a prerequisite for philosophical progress, and his close ties with Xenocrates, Crates, and Crantor make it reasonable for Sedley to conclude that the debates about how to interpret Plato's proems originated within Polemo's Academy.

Proclus informs us that those advocating an ethical interpretation assumed that Plato's proems instruct readers more successfully than the formalized theorems of Stoic technical treatises. Rather than compose treatises and handbooks that deduce theorems for action, Plato chose to sketch or display in his proems, as well as in the dialogue as a whole, what is appropriate for his readers to emulate in action. Proclus says (*in Tim.* I 16.6–12): "Others have written treatises about *kathêkonta*, by means of which they suppose they are making their pupils better in character. But Plato uses the actual imitation of the best men to sketch to us the main outline features of *kathêkonta*. And these have a much more powerful effect than things stored away in bare rules. For imitation has its own *special way of shaping the lives of those who read it*." For ethical interpreters, Plato had the sense to realize how little good a treatise would do for readers. To know how to act properly in a given situation is not just a matter of having the correct theorem. The philosophical background of this disagreement pertains to a psychological theory that the Academy may have assumed, one that opposes Zeno's purely rational soul.[16] Academics likely held to the view that actions are oriented by a network of beliefs and desires, such that a harmony of rational and emotive parts of the soul would be the more effective way to bring about appropriate action. According to the ethical interpretation, the kind of action that the Platonic dialogue seems interested in shaping is a highly personal kind of achievement. To make progress one has to sort out one's own beliefs, which are tied to one's own personal experiences, dispositions, desires, and so on. Appropriate actions are thus not a matter of merely having the correct argument or following the correct rule, nor is it a matter of being told by someone else what the correct argument or rule

16 Sedley (1999b), 151–2.

for a given action might be, as Zeno's purely rational soul seems to entail. In questioning authority, whether it be the authority of tradition, the authority of the many, or the authority of self-styled experts and sages, the aim of Socratic cross-examinations may have appeared to expose the ignorance of authority without assuming in turn the position of an authority, orally transmitting a specific rule for action. It would be for the respondent to progress to the right view through the exercise of one's own reasoning, free from the authority of formalized theorems set out in a handbook or treatise.

Crantor, the first exegete, is a plausible source for Proclus' summary of the three ways of interpreting the proems, as well as the anonymous commentator's remarks on Plato's sketch or display. He brings us closer to the motivation that may have driven Arcesilaus' apparent deviation. We have no direct evidence indicating that Arcesilaus affirmed or denied the ethical interpretation. Earlier in the paper I introduced the fundamental reason for our dependence on fragments and testimonies in studying the Hellenistic Academy. The reason we depend on sources like Proclus is that unlike his lover Crantor, Arcesilaus chose not to write commentaries (or dialogues and treatises). Given the likelihood that Arcesilaus was familiar with Crantor's treatment of the proems, the question presses upon us: at a time when Academics began discussing how to read and comment on Plato's dialogues, why does Arcesilaus maintain such interpretive silence?

In this regard, the Stoic Cleanthes's observation is informative: "Although he [Arcesilaus] abolished the *kathêkon* in argument, he affirms it in practice" (D.L. 7.171). Cleanthes surely meant that Arcesilaus abolished the Stoic notion of *kathêkon*. Such an affirmative practice harmonizes with Polemo's rejection of dialectical theorizing as the primary mechanism of appropriate action. For both Polemo and Arcesilaus, it seems that certain kinds of practices attain a standard of appropriateness without the verbal transmission of formalized precepts in technical treatises. Given that the ethical interpretation extends to the depiction of interpersonal cross-examination in the main part of the dialogue, it is a small inferential step from reading proems as sketching or displaying proper ethical conduct of the best men to reading the dialogue as sketching the activity of interpersonal argument that occurs without the explicit verbalization of philosophical doctrine. But again is there any evidence to suggest that such a step had been taken by an Academic? In other words, was there an Academic who read Plato's dialogues as furnishing exemplary dramatic displays of interpersonal disputation for the reader's imitation, which then gave rise to a manner of arguing that withheld the verbal transmission of doctrines prescribing what respondents in oral argument should think and how to act?

It is worth considering whether Arcesilaus' approach to the Platonic corpus may have been shaped by the various interpretative strategies for reading Plato offered by his contemporaries. Such a reading would recognize Plato's dialogues as the kind of display which fosters in the reader a freedom to think apart from rules and doctrinal authority. By not voicing his opinions in the course of disputation or openly affirming the authority of certain opinions taken from the dialogues, Arcesilaus arguably emulated the displays of oral inquiry in Plato's dialogues to foster in interlocutors the freedom to think for oneself. Cicero, in criticizing those who profess to teach by simply reiterating the judgments of a treatise or person they approve, insinuates why Arcesilaus and Academics after Arcesilaus never openly endorsed the authority of either one or all of Plato's dialogues in oral argument. "In fact, for those who want to learn, the *auctoritas* of those who profess to teach is usually a hindrance: they give up applying their own judgment, and take as sanctioned whatever they see to have been the judgment of the person they endorse" (*De nat. de.* 1.10). Rather than submit oneself to the doctrines of an authority, Cicero insists on the freedom of Arcesilaus and the Academy. Academics are "freer and less constrained" in the sense that their inquiries are "not obliged to defend a set of views prescribed and imposed by someone else" (*Ac.* 2.8–9, 60, cf. *Tusc. Disp.* 5.33, 83, *De Divinatione* 2.150, Galen, *Optima Doctrina* 1). The displays of oral argument in Plato function as informal exemplary guides for how to inquire and act free from the authority of rules or doctrines.

No wonder, then, that Arcesilaus is presented as the first Academic to place exclusive emphasis on oral argument, a master of tailoring arguments to the occasion (D.L. 4.37, 4.42). Cicero does report that Arcesilaus seized from "various books and Socratic discussions of Plato" (*De orat.* 3.67) the belief that nothing can be apprehended for certain by the senses or the mind. But the passage continues, pointing out that Arcesilaus seized on arguments for this belief in order to challenge interlocutors while "not showing what he thought." Thus arguments were taken and implemented into oral interrogation without any attempt on the part of Arcesilaus to establish what he thought about a given topic, including the correct interpretation of a specific Platonic dialogue or set of dialogues.[17]

Oral disputation issues a personal challenge for interlocutors to defend and examine affirmed beliefs in view of contrary beliefs. From the interpersonal aspect of oral argument and the sheer lack of authorship, hostile and conflicting

17 *contra* Annas (1992), 47–61, Glucker (1978), 31–47 and Lévy (1990), 298–300 and (2013), 32–41.

assessments of what Arcesilaus intended to prove were bound to bewilder other philosophers. As already noted, Aristo's jibe at Arcesilaus' chameleonic appearance epitomizes the dizzying nature of his method. In hindsight, it thus seems that later doctrinal readers of Plato like Antiochus are predestined to rebuke his manner of inquiry for seeking to overturn "a complete system of teachings" (*Ac.* 2.15, cf. 1.33–43, *Ac.* 2.61, *De nat. de.* 1.16, *De fin.* 5.74) and "cloak that which is clearly known in darkness" (*Ac.* 2.16); or for Numenius to liken Arcesilaus to a mythical monster, reversing himself in argument and saying things against what he had uttered moments before. The main problem with these colorful animadversions is that they entirely neglect the ethical dispute that prefigures Arcesilaus' encounters with Zeno and his followers. The same can be said for Cicero's three-part genealogy of the New Academy, which nonetheless affirms the uninterrupted continuity between the Old and New Academy (*Ac.* 1.45). On its face, Cicero's negligence in this context remains puzzling. The confusion might begin to wane if we recall that Cicero's genealogy represents the fulfilment of his own intimate encounter with Socrates and Plato. As we shall see in the final section, not only does Cicero's genealogy culminate in his own literary emulation of Platonic dialogue, it also advances a newer Academic tendency to sever the method of arguing for and against particular topics from cross-examination. This tendency seems to emerge within Carneades' Academy.

IV From Carneades to Cicero

According to Cicero, Carneades "strengthened" Arcesilaus' arguments (*De nat. de.* 1.11). Presumably the "strengthening" grew out of an effort to keep pace with the development of Stoic philosophy advanced by Chrysippus. On his embassy to Rome, Carneades employed the manner of arguing "on either side", and we have evidence that during his embassy Carneades felt free to argue for as well as against certain arguments articulated by Socrates in Plato's *Rep.* (*De re pub.* 3.9). Carneades argued generally for and against justice, virtue, and Stoic theology, thus extending the systematic scope of Arcesilaus' arguments. But just as it had been difficult for the contemporaries of Arcesilaus to grasp what he approved in his many-sided manner of oral arguments, the wide-ranging arguments of Carneades incited an interpretive difficulty within the Academy. His immediate successors disagreed over what Carneades himself actually believed. Carneades admitted that he could not recognize his own thinking in the notes of his student Zeno of Alexandria (*Index Ac.* 22.37), and Clitomachus devoted over four hundred books to his teacher Carneades (D.L. 4.67),

even though he confessed to having never been able to understand which views Carneades really approved (*Ac.* 2.139). It therefore remains unknown whether Clitomachus offered textual analysis of Plato's dialogues, but since our evidence generally does not characterize Carneades as a teacher or expositor of Plato's dialogues,[18] it is unlikely that Clitomachus' writings defended any interpretation of individual dialogues, or the corpus as a whole. But as we shall see below, this is not to suggest that Carneades' Academy abandoned the study of Plato's dialogues.

As Carneades continued to articulate new arguments against a new generation of Stoic philosophers, the new arguments seemed to conflict with arguments he articulated on other occasions. Carneades likely compounded the difficulty with his admired eloquence and persuasiveness (*De orat.* 1.45). His persuasive talents may have intensified the enthusiasm of his Academic successors to understand which of the arguments and views, if any, he approved generally. In certain dialectical situations, Carneades conformed to Arcesilaus' tactic of granting two Stoic premises: that a sage will never hold an opinion, and thus remain infallible (*Ac.* 2.67). In arguing for the non-existence of true impressions, Carneades would deduce that the sage must suspend assent about everything. In other situations, however, Carneades would counter the infallibility of the sage by apparently arguing that a sage does assent to something unknown, thereby making the sage fallible (*Ac.* 2.78, 67, 59). The first argument denies the cataleptic impression, granting for the sake of the argument the infallibility of the sage, and inferring from both the denial and the premise the negative conclusion that the sage will not act. The second argument also denies the cataleptic impression, but that denial follows from a different premise. This argument grants that assent is necessary for a sage or any human being to live, and infers from both this premise and the non-existence of true impressions, the positive conclusion that the sage acts and thus is irremediably fallible. In short, the sage must assent in order to act. While Carneades formulated both arguments in different dialectical contexts, the second in particular compels a number of his followers to expand the role of dialectic from its function in interpersonal dialogue to a "new" Academic method for establishing conclusions on any topic whatsoever (*Ac.* 2.7).[19]

Clitomachus' inability to determine his teacher's actual views notwithstanding, he quarrelled with fellow Academics (Metrodorus of Stratonicea and Philo

18 Glucker (1978), 48.

19 See Görler (1994), 928–31 for the claim that Cicero is the first Academic to extend Arcesilaus' revival of arguing on either side as a method for arriving at positive conclusions.

of Larissa) over the status of Carneades' second argument. Clitomachus interpreted both arguments as equally dependent on the dialectical context and thus equally dialectical, perhaps supposing that Carneades fashioned both arguments to suit the occasion and conceal his actual beliefs, just like Arcesilaus. Evidently Philo disagreed. It seems that Philo found in Carneades' appeal to "persuasive impressions" (see *Ac.* 2.32, *Adv. Math.* 7.175, *Adv. Math.* 7.184) a criterion according to which an Academic could defend the conclusion of the second argument. What was introduced as a part of a dialectical argument became a criterion against which any impression is measured as more or less true, transforming dialectic into a constructive vehicle for teaching and arguing for persuasive conclusions, even deciding on particular courses of action. When Cicero says that the Academy of his day "abandoned" the manner of interpersonal discussion that Socrates initiated and Arcesilaus later revived (*De fin.* 2.2), one should take this as another indication that either Carneades or his Academic disciples began to detach dialectical argument from its earlier role in cross-examination.

Another indication of this transformation comes from the anonymous *Prolegomena to Plato's Philosophy*, written by a Neoplatonic author around the sixth century AD.[20] The author assigns five arguments to those who seek to characterize Plato as either Academic or *ephectic*, "one who suspends judgment" (10.1–11.20). The first argument appeals to Plato's use of expressions to indicate his reservations, such as *eikos* ("likely"), *isôs* (i.e., "perhaps") and *takh' hôs oimai* ("perhaps, I think"). The second argument deduces from the premise that Plato argues opposite positions on certain issues the conclusion that Plato ultimately advocates *akatalêpsia*, citing as support for that conclusion the *Lysis*, *Charmides*, and *Euthyphro*. The third argument casts the negative arguments of *Theaetetus* as demonstrations that Plato adheres to *akatalêpsia*. The fourth alludes to Plato's rebuke of perception and mind for their inherent tendency to err. The fifth takes statements in the dialogues such as "I know nothing and I teach nothing" as utterances from Plato's "own mouth" that there is no knowledge. The author is not in a position to distill the actual views of Arcesilaus and Carneades on Plato's dialogues from their many oral arguments.[21] Instead, the author draws on a source which argues in a style that became prevalent after

20 Westerink, Trouillard and Segonds (1990), LXXXIV.

21 On the basis of the terminology in this passage of the *Prolegomena*, Ioppolo (2008), 472–3 argues that the commentator critically responds to a Neo-pyrrhonian view (no earlier than the first century BCE) that attempts to align Plato with a Pyrrhonian tradition. We should also keep in mind that Plutarch's *Adv. Col.* (1121f–1123b) is Plutarch's own reconstructed defense of Arcesilaus against Colotes (*c.* 320–266 BCE), the Epicurean who

Carneades, chiefly among those seeking to fashion Plato a Pyrrhonist.[22] That style dispenses with Socrates' strict emphasis on oral discussion, detaching the many-sided manner of argument from its function in oral disputation to portray Plato making a case for his own negative conclusions about knowledge.

Cicero's three-part genealogy is another indication of this tendency to openly present conclusions. Unlike Plato, Cicero intrudes into the written dialogue with his own voice. This intrusion is the literary device by which Cicero's genealogy reconciles two competing ways of interpreting Carneades' second argument. While Cicero abides by Clitomachus' dialectical interpretation as the accurate historical view of Carneades' argument (*Ac.* 2.78, 67), Cicero actually believes and openly asserts the positive view that the sage will not assent to an opinion (*Ac.* 2.66, 2.113). But by expressing his views in the form of a written dialogue, Cicero is able to reinscribe the many-sided manner of argument back into oral disputation, preserving both Clitomachus' emphasis on the context of dialectical argument and a growing tendency among Academics to argue openly for definite conclusions more generally. If, however, one sought for an Academic who appears to imitate Arcesilaus and Carneades more strictly, it would be Charmadas, for concealing his beliefs in oral argument (*De orat.* 1.84). Carneades is said to have remarked that Charmadas restated his arguments "in the same manner" (*Orat.* 51).[23] That is, Charmadas argued dialectically, and did not advance positive views. Because Charmadas said things "in the same manner" that Carneades said them, it seems that Charmadas was the last Academic to fully embrace the oral tradition revived by Arcesilaus.

Despite his drift away from a purely oral tradition, Cicero manages to capture the spirit of the Academy's controversial disputations. For it makes sense to say that Cicero was comparatively "freer" and "less constrained" (*liberiores et solutiores*, *Ac.* 2.8) by the reception of Plato than the disciples of other schools in reading the canonical writings of their respective founders. It is this freedom that allows Cicero, the self-confessed *magnus opinator*, to correct and emend Academic philosophy, projecting a plausible view of the Academy's reception of Plato back on his Academic predecessors. Cicero's genealogy mitigates our dependence on fragments and testimonies, provided that his writings are scrutinized not as mere historical testimony, but as a model for exercising freedom in the ongoing reception of Platonic dialogues.

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criticized Socrates and Arcesilaus, among others. Like the anonymous commentator, Plutarch does not cite Arcesilaus' actual arguments. See Mette (1986), n.92.

22 Tarrant (1983), 169–71

23 cf. Lévy (2005), n.23

CHAPTER 4

Return to Plato and Transition to Middle Platonism in Cicero[1]

François Renaud

I Cicero's Reception in Outline

It is difficult to determine with precision what Platonic dialogues Cicero (106–43 BCE) actually read. His references to them are often indirect and allusive. Yet Plato's stature as a philosopher is never in doubt. Cicero is unstinting in his praise, referring to Plato as "the prince of philosophers" (*princeps philosophorum*)[2] and the most eloquent of them all. He considers him first and foremost to be a sceptical thinker, faithful to the Socratic heritage. He nevertheless distinguishes Socrates from Plato, as he sees Platonism as being composed of the Socratic and the Pythagorean. It can be argued that Cicero's predilection for Plato over Aristotle,[3] in conjunction with a certain return to transcendence, foreshadows Middle Platonism. Indeed Cicero's scepticism is not incompatible with convictions about the existence of the divine in us and beyond us.

Cicero's complex and varied use of the Platonic dialogues spans from literal translation to mere allusion.[4] He sometimes draws on a dialogue without naming it, following a common practice in antiquity. He also presupposes a basic unity in the Platonic corpus, which is why he does not hesitate directly to link one dialogue with another. He does not, however, give a privileged status to any dialogue as a guide to the rest of the corpus, although he does have a certain predilection for the *Phaedrus.* His reading, especially in the 50's, is above all moral and political in orientation. He also associates closely the teachings of a dialogue or of a group of dialogues with certain Stoic or Peripatetic views. The study of Cicero's "Platonism" cannot be limited to his explicitly philosophical works and must include his treatises on rhetoric, as well as his vast correspondence.

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1 My warmest thanks go to my friend and colleague Jeremy Hayhoe for proofreading the English text as well as my co-editors for their insightful suggestions.

2 *De fin.* 5.7.

3 *Tusc. Disp.* 1.22.

4 Cf. Gildenhard (2013), 225–27.

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The question about Cicero's sources is complex and controversial. When does he refer to Plato's text directly and when does he rely on intermediary, Hellenistic or contemporary sources? Cicero's most important contemporary source with regard to the Academy is unquestionably Philo of Larissa (c. 145–79 BCE). In connection with Stoicism, as well as with Platonism, he makes use of Antiochus of Ascalon (c. 124–69 BCE); and he uses Cratippus of Pergamon (1st BCE) for Aristotelianism. This chapter will not directly discuss the fraught question of his sources but aims instead to highlight his direct and relatively free reception of the dialogues.

Cicero's reception of Plato can be characterized in at least three ways: 1) as a key testimony to a pivotal chapter in the history of Platonism; 2) as an examplar of the rebirth of Platonism in the first century BCE; and 3) as significantly impacting his own philosophical dialogues.[5] Let us consider these three aspects, before presenting two case studies in the latter half of this chapter.

1) *Testimony to a Pivotal Period*

Cicero is an important witnesses of, and actor in, the history of the Academy in the first century BCE, a time of new directions and reorientations in philosophy, including the slow transition from the sceptical interpretation of the New Academy to the doctrinal reading of Middle Platonism. This change poses enormous difficulties of reconstruction given the fragmentary nature of our sources, notably with regard to Philo of Larissa and Antiochus of Ascalon, respectively advocates of the sceptical and dogmatic interpretations, whose divergent interpretations are part of the "great dispute" in antiquity.[6] The social and political context in Cicero's time further enhances the importance of this dispute. The First Mithridatic War (89–85 BCE) and Sulla's prolonged siege in Athens (88–86 BCE) lead to a break in the Academy's institutional authority in Athens, a "brain-drain" towards Rome and elsewhere that lead, in turn, to a decentralisation of philosophy and the renewal of philosophical schools, notably Platonism.[7] Cicero was taught by both main figures in the dispute, Philo and Antiochus, which makes it somewhat problematical to establish his philosophical affiliation.[8] In general terms he sides with Philo's probabilism but

5 Cf. Hösle (2008), 146–49.

6 D.L. 3.51: πολλὴ στάσις. On the quarrel more specifically between Philo and Antiochus, see Glucker (1978), Tarrant (1985), Schofield (2013b), 76–78.

7 Cf. Sedley (2003); Ioppolo and Sedley (2007), 10–11.

8 Glucker (1988) defends the view that Cicero's philosophical stance goes through three successive periods: adherence to Philo, then to Antiochus and finally a return to Philo's New Academy. On Cicero's relation to Antiochus, see also Schofield (2012), 243–9.

adopts some of Antiochus' tenets.[9] He defines his allegiance to Plato primarily in methodological terms, holding the dialectical debate (*disputatio in utramque partem*) to be the best means to attain truth or an approximation thereof. He expounds this conception especially in the *Academica* (cf. 2.7–9), in which he tries to determine the authentic heritage of the Academy.

Scholars have long underappreciated the importance of Cicero's testimony, on the grounds of his rootedness in Roman culture, which would allegedly exclude him linguistically and institutionally from the (Greek) history of Platonism. He is frequently denied the title of Platonist and sometimes even that of philosopher. The exclusion of Cicero from the Platonic school rests on a purely doctrinal conception of Platonism.[10] Platonism in this reading is constituted by the doctrines on the soul and the ideas. This conception, however, should be challenged. There are good reasons to consider Platonism as more than a doctrine in the strict sense of the term, namely as fidelity to a heritage related to the spirit of dialectical search. The history of the Academy in antiquity should be characterized as a tradition of relatively free appropriation. A tradition of appropriation with the Academy's history proves to have been a key factor allowing Platonism to adapt to varying contexts of reception and thus insuring its survival. This also helps to explain how Platonism could survive the violent dissensions within the Academy in the first century BCE. These severe dissensions gave rise to the desire to rediscover the authentic Platonic heritage beyond the Hellenistic debates that had led to this impasse. Cicero and Plutarch are our two principal testimonies to this return to the Platonic dialogues.

2) *Rebirth of Platonism*

While Cicero's direct knowledge of Aristotle's treatises appears to be relatively limited,[11] much of his knowledge of the Platonic dialogues seems to be independent of the Hellenistic reception, including that of Carneades, Antiochus and even, to some degree, of Philo. He is part of the rebirth of Platonism in the

9 On Antiochus and later, imperial Platonism, cf. Bonazzi (2012c).

10 Cf. Dörrie (1987), 543; Brittain (2008), 527.

11 See Fortenbaugh (1989) and Hatzimichali (2013), 24–25. He is likely to have read his exoteric writings, especially his now lost dialogues, which he very much admired. While the influence of the Aristotelian conception of dialectic is evident (for the method *in utramque partem dicere*; cf. Long (1995), 52–58), he may have had only indirect access to the *Rhetoric* and to the *Topics*. Andronicus' edition, which begins to circulate towards the second half of the first century BCE only, may have been unknown to him. Cf. Sharples (2010), 2.

first century BCE which is characterized by a return to the classic founders.[12] The renewed interest in the *Timaeus* then is an important event.

The archaistic classicism of the age may strike us as a form of sterile traditionalism. Today we often oppose Plato and the Platonism of tradition presented as the free quest and autonomous acquisition of knowledge to a straightforward, often rigid transmission of that knowledge[13] It is true that imperial Platonism sometime displays scholastic and very conservative attitudes, notably in the explicit refusal of all innovation (νεωτερίζειν). As a member of the New Academy Cicero does not accept, in principle at least, any authority other than reason[14] and defends the Philonian idea of a single, continuous Academy.[15] His appropriation of Platonic thinking implies its transformation through Hellenistic and Roman categories, but this transformation is also a matter of Cicero's personal, engaged relation to the Greek author. He himself compares his relation to Plato to that of Ennius to Homer. Such is the original meaning of imitation (μίμησις, *imitatio*), which is at the same time emulation (ζήλωσις, *aemulatio*).[16] And this is the meaning of Quintilian's designation of Cicero as "Plato's rival" (*Platoni aemulus*).[17] His return to Plato takes the form of a dialogue and contest, the stakes of which are nothing less than the meaning of philosophy (φιλοσοφία). A fair amount of the intensity animating the Platonic dialogues also characterize Cicero's philosophical work. This vitality contributes to the distance separating him from the Greek master.[18] He wishes to serve his country by offering it the best of Greek philosophy, starting with Plato, and creating a philosophical corpus in Latin. Such is the basic principle of this first philosophical classicism in Rome.[19] Similarly to Lucretius, Cicero has the ambitious project of overcoming the intellectual poverty of Latin and the prejudices

12 Cf. Puelma (1980), 164.

13 Cf. e. g. Dörrie (1971), 25.

14 *Ac.* 2. 8–9; *De nat. de.* 1.10–11. However it does happen that Plato's authority has the upper hand over the principle of the autonomous *ratio*, which the Greek philosopher also embodies in his eyes: *Errare mehercule malo cum Platone* [...] *quam cum istis vera sentire* (*Tusc. Disp.* 1.39); cf. *Phd.* 91b–c.

15 On the one Academy thesis and the skeptical dimension of Platonism in Philo and Plutarch, see Tarrant (1985), 22–32 and Opsomer (1998) respectively. Cf. Brittain (2001), 169–254.

16 Cf. Ps.-Longinus, *On the Sublime* 13.2–14; Flashar (1979), 92.

17 *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1, 123.

18 Cf. Burkert (1960), 184 and 189.

19 Horace, *Ars poetica* 268–9. Cicero (*Tusc. Disp.* 1.5–6) regards the hitherto Latin translations as unsatisfactory. For the larger context of that philosophical classicism, which would relativize this general claim, see Vesperini (2012), 44–75.

of his contemporaries against his translation and transplantation project.[20] This return to Plato is not characteristic of the 50's only (the decade of his great "trilogy": *De oratore, De republica, de Legibus*), but also in part of the 40's (*Orator, Brutus, Tusculan Disputations, Timaeus*). His vast project ultimately is to reconcile wisdom and eloquence.[21]

What of Plato did Cicero actually read? His translations provide an initial approach to the question. He translated the *Protagoras* in its entirety (now lost) as well the *Timaeus*, at least section 27d–47b, which we possess, preceded by a prologue. He also translated several passages from various dialogues, freely integrating them into his own writings. Generally Cicero's method of translation is both relatively faithful and quite pliable to the context it serves.[22] Cicero also makes numerous allusions to works that he did not translate.[23] Combining both types of evidence, it is highly probable that Cicero read in entirety the following dialogues: *Protagoras, Timaeus*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, *Meno*, *Phaedo, Menexenus*, *Republic*, *Laws*, as well as the *Letters*, all of which he seems to regard as authentic.[24] He nowhere refers by name to the *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* or *Parmenides*, and he may not have had access to them.[25] This is almost certainly the case with the *Theaetetus*, the epistemological examination of which would necessarily have induced in him the most vivid interest. Nor does he ever speak in his work of the "unwritten doctrines" alluded to in some of the *Letters* and by some disciples, notably Aristotle. Generally his free use of the dialogues bespeak his relative independence from the Athenian philosopher. The *De republica*, for instance, explicitly takes Plato's *Republic* as model while openly rejecting some of its basic components.[26] As we shall see, he does the same in *De Oratore* especially with respect of the *Gorgias*.

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20 Cf. Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1.832: *patrii sermonis egestas; De re pub*. 1.65: *difficile factu est, conabor tamen*. Cf. Lévy (1992), 93, 97, 106; Baraz (2012), 113–27. For a complete and systematically organized survey of Cicero's remarks on the subject see Glucker (2012).

21 *Tusc. Disp.* 1.7.

22 Poncelet (1957) for instance insists on the limits and various determinations imposed by the Latin language, thus underestimating Cicero's creative freedom; cf. Lambardi (1982), 10–17.

23 He has also translated a passage from the Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in his dialogue *De Senectute* (79–81). Cf. Dörrie (1987), 484 as well as DeGraff (1940), especially 146.

24 For the controversial case of the *Alcibiades I* see Renaud and Tarrant (2015), 110–37.

25 Cf. Orellius–Baiterus (1836–38), vol. 2, 460–64.

26 For instance about the community of women and children: *De re pub*. 4.5; cf. 2.9; 2.29.

3) *Writing of Dialogues*

Cicero is not only a reader of Plato, he is also the author of dialogues. In fact he is the only ancient philosopher after Plato whose philosophical dialogues have been mostly preserved, if we exclude Plutarch's philosophically lighter dialogues and those of the young Augustine, who was an avid Cicero reader. While he wrote no commentaries that offer detailed exegesis justifying his interpretation of Plato, his practice of dialogue rests on his interpretation of the dialogues, the outlines of which he sometimes offers in his theoretical expositions. Moreover as an author of dialogues he might be considered to be more faithful to the Platonic conception of philosophical writing than the commentators are. He discusses the epistemological basis of his Platonism in the *Academica*, its political aspects in the *De republica*, *De legibus*, its ethical teaching in the *De finibus* and the *Tusculan Disputations*, and the relation between philosophy and rhetoric especially in the *De oratore*. His Plato interpretation is also apparent in his use of literary techniques.

His dialogues possess, as he himself claims, their own structure (*scribendi ordo*) and express his personal judgment (*iudicum*).[27] His ability and subtlety in writing dialogues have long been underappreciated.[28] Recent studies tend to correct this judgment to underscore their originality.[29] Like his Platonic counterpart, the Ciceronian dialogue is characterized by freedom of thought, in deliberate opposition to dogmatic obstinacy (*pertinacia*).[30] This freedom is reflected in the seemingly improvised nature of the dramatic action, including humour and wit, as part of his understanding of irony.[31] His dialogue can be distinguished from the Platonic model in many ways. His dialogue includes one or more prefaces where he expounds his intentions.[32] The unique preface of *de Divinatione* II contains a valuable chronological catalogue of Cicero's works. He sometime plays the role of one of the interlocutors, following Aristotle's example in his lost dialogues.[33] As a result Cicero is emphatically present

27 *De fin.* 1.6.

28 Here are a few important exceptions among classic studies: Hirzel (1895), 457–552; Becker (1938); Ruch (1958).

29 Hösle (2006), 91–100, (2008); Schofield (2008), (2013b).

30 Cf. *Tusc. Disp.* 2.5.

31 *De or.* 2.269–270.

32 For a detailed analysis of all of these prefaces, see Ruch (1958) and more recently Baraz (2012).

33 See Zanatta's bilingual and commented collection (2008). For the influence of Heraclides Ponticus, see Cicero *Epistulae ad Familiares* 1.9, 23 (from September 54).

in his dialogues, in contrast with Plato, who is deliberately absent from his.[34] The prefaces, the catalogue of his works and his frequent role as interlocutor, in addition to his correspondence (c. 900 letters) give greater access to Cicero's thought, than we have to that of Plato. Ciceronian dialogues always take place in private, often in a distant past (e. g. *De re pub.*, *De or.*, *Cato major de Senectute*). His characters are usually great Roman political figures, who meet and discuss as equals. The atmosphere is peaceful and friendly. The discussion is conducted in a conciliatory spirit, as opposed for instance to the *Gorgias* or *Euthydemus*.[35] The erotic dimension characteristic of Socratic dialectic is entirely absent. Refutations (*elenchoi*) are relatively rare due no doubt to Cicero's concern for a peaceful atmosphere, the age and class distinctions in accordance to Roman traditional values and good manners. Cicero's aim is to enrich, not overturn, the *mos maiorum* by the incorporation Greek culture into it.[36] Perhaps the most striking difference between Ciceronian and Platonic dialogues is the mode of argumentation. Contrary to the short questions and replies typical of the Platonic dialogue (διαλέγεσθαι), Cicero usually prefers debates involving long speeches (*disputatio in utramque partem*). Such is the case of the *Academica*, *De finibus* and *De natura deorum*.[37] This preference is linked to judicial practices that Cicero knew very well, but it also proceeds from his conviction that this type of discussion allows for a more complete presentation of a doctrine.[38] Dialectic thus conceived would be the best means for the

34 Schofield (2008), 73 and 75 defends for that reason the view that the Ciceronian dialogue is more open, less dogmatic than its Platonic counterpart, in opposing for instance the *Phd.* and that of the *De natura deorum*, namely an eschatological myth seeking to persuade the reader by contrast with the rational, calm, non-emotional examination characteristic of the Ciceronian dialogue.

35 Cicero discusses the ethical implications of (Socratic) conversation (*sermo*) in the *De off.* (1.134–7). On that important passage and the tension between friendship and the requirement of truth, see Renaud (2018).

36 Cf. Fantham (2004), 53. As in the case of Plato it is necessary to make a distinction between Cicero's explicit remarks (such as in the prefaces) and the indirect indications derived from the dramaturgy, such as the setting (time, place, etc.) and the characters.

37 Cicero calls the conversations in his dialogues *sermones* and often designates his written dialogues *disputationes*, which are mimetic in nature and comprising a rhetoric dimension: *De fin.* 2.17; *Tusc. Disp.* 1.112. For a defense of Cicero's rhetorical strategy in *De fin.* 2 for instance, see Inwood (1990).

38 Cf. *De fin.* 2.3: *Nos commodius agimus. Non enim solum Torquatus dixit quid sentiret sed etiam cur*. See how in the same passage, after stating his preference for the Socratic method and its advantages (*cum in rebus singulis insistas et intelligas quid quisque concedat*), he quickly gives it up in favor of long speeches.

attainment of truth or at least the probable (*verisimile*, *probabile,* πιθανόν) as well as an excellent rhetorical exercise.[39] This striking feature is no doubt the main reason why modern commentators routinely call his dialogues "treatises". Calling them instead "dialogue-treatise", as Schofield suggests,[40] would be a good compromise, and has the advantage of underlining the relative novelty of Cicero's practice. He may even be a key figure in the development of this type of philosophical dialogue structured in pairs of opposed speeches (*in contrarias partes*). He emphatically seeks to combine a logical and systematic presentation of doctrines with persuasive elegance. This would embody the union of wisdom (*prudentia*) and eloquence. The reader targeted by the dialogue-treatise is the educated public, a fact that distinguishes it from oratory, which speaks to the crowd and appeals to its emotions.

II Two Case Studies: *Gorgias* and *Timaeus*

1) *Gorgias:* Philosophy, Rhetoric and Public life

Reconciling philosophy and rhetoric is Cicero's lifetime project, from the *De inventione* to his writings in the forties. Plato was both an inspiration for and a challenge to the project. The *De oratore* (from 55), the dialogue formulating his vast synthesis, is inspired in form and content by the *Phaedrus*, which contains the sketch of a philosophical rhetoric. Commentators have pointed out the dramaturgic allusions, starting with the peaceful atmosphere in the shade of plane trees. Here I will focus primarily on the challenge that the *Gorgias*'s critical stance towards rhetoric poses for Cicero.[41] Although the *De oratore* contains only two explicit references to the *Gorgias* that are relevant to the question raised (1.47 and 3.60–61), these two references are enlightening and far reaching. Reading the Ciceronian project as a response to the *Gorgias* enriches our understanding of Cicero's thought.[42]

39 *Ac.* 2.99–101. In this Cicero seems to follow the "Aristotelian fashion" (*De or.* 3.80). He brings together the Socratic and the Aristotelian methods (*Tusc. Disp.* 2.9). In other words he appeals to the antilogical method (*utramque partem*) and defends the *probabilia* (or *similia veri*).

40 Schofield (2008), 67; MacKendrick (1989), 25.

41 In the *Gorgias* Socrates nevertheless occasionally recognizes good rhetoric: 503a–b, 504d5–6, 517a5.

42 See Schütrumpf's (1988) tentative but in many ways insightful analysis of structural parallels between *De oratore* I and the *Gorgias*.

In Book I of the *De oratore*, Crassus, in many ways Cicero's spokesman, says that he studied *Gorgias* in company of the Academician Charmadas (c. 165–v. 91 BCE), a pupil of Carneades. The dialogue struck them as paradoxical:

> I read [Plato's *Gorgias*] with close attention (*diligentius*) under Charmadas during those days at Athens, and what impressed us most deeply about Plato in that book was that it was when making fun of orators that he himself seemed to us to be the consummate orator (*quod mihi in oratoribus inridendis ipse esse orator summus videbatur*). (trans.) Sutton and Rackham slightly modified.[43]

First, this passage tells us that the *Gorgias* was read and studied in the Academy at the time. Through Crassus, Cicero gently criticizes Plato for having a contradictory take on oratory or, to put it more forcefully and in modern terms, for being guilty of performative self-contradiction, given his rhetorical condemnation of rhetoric. Second, Crassus' remark gives us a glimpse into discussions taking place in the New Academy on rhetoric at the end of the second century BCE.[44] The interest taken in the *Gorgias* as well as the critical attitude towards rhetoric at the New Academy then is confirmed shortly after (1.84–86). Given the lack of concrete evidence, Charmadas remains a shadowy figure. It is difficult to know whether his criticism of rhetoric is complete or whether it entertains the possibility of a philosophical rhetoric.[45] In any case, his successor, Philo of Larissa, does grant rhetoric its rightful place within the Academy's curriculum when he begins teaching it on a regular basis.[46] This turning point has no doubt contributed to building closer ties between philosophy and

43 *De or.* 1.47. For Cicero's texts I shall refer to the Loeb Classical Library for the translation. The name of the translator is in all cases given. The references to Plato's texts are to the Burnet edition (1901–07). The English translations of Plato, which I have sometimes modified, are those of the *Complete Works* edited by Cooper (1997).

44 *De or.* 1.84–93.

45 On Charmadas see Tarrant (1985), 34–40; Brittain (2001), 319–28; Dorandi (1994); Lévy (2005), 60–70; (2014), 73–76. Lévy (2014), 80 sees in this a thoroughgoing criticism of rhetoric, which denies the possibility of a philosophical rhetoric envisaged in the *Phaedrus* (and in fact already in the *Gorgias*; see *Grg.* 480c, 502e, 504d, 508c, 517a and 527c) and which would also be in contradiction with the anti-dogmatism of the New Academy; according to Tarrant (1985), 38–40, however, Charmadas' criticism of conventional rhetoric does not exclude the possibility of a noble rhetoric; likewise Dorandi (1994), 298.

46 *Tusc. Disp.* 2.9. This turning point would have occurred around 95. Cf. Long (1995), 54; Brittain (2001), 296–342.

rhetoric. These ties are reflected in Cicero's inclusion of the general questions in the rhetorical domain.[47] The general questions (θέσεις, *questiones infinitae*), in comparison with the particular questions (ὑποθέσεις, *quaestiones definitae*), pertain to basic notions considered to lie at the heart of public life (*in re publica*), such as "the immortal gods, the training of youth, justice, endurance, self-control, or moderation in all things," etc. (1.85, trans. Sutton and Rackham).[48] Cicero incorporates the general questions into his own synthesis,[49] thus recovering the initiative of Hermagoras (c. 150 BC) and ultimately of the *Phaedrus*.[50] From the *Phaedrus* Cicero also retrieves the principle that the ideal orator must know the various kinds of soul and the various kinds of discourse capable of persuading each of them.[51]

In the second reference to the *Gorgias*, in Book III (60–61), Cicero formulates an even more forceful and far-reaching criticism. This time the target is none other than Socrates, "the father of philosophers." Cicero, again through Crassus, accuses him of having shattered the original unity between language and thought:

> This is the source from which has sprung the undoubtedly absurd and unprofitable and reprehensible severance (*discidium*) between the tongue and the brain (*linguae atque cordis*), leading to our having one set of professors to teach us to think and another to teach us to speak (*alii nos sapere, alii dicere docerent*). (trans.) Rackham.[52]

This is an astonishing accusation as Cicero praises Socrates highly as a philosopher and conversationalist both in the *De oratore* and elsewhere. He generally regards him as the unsurpassed master in dialectical argumentation[53] and extols his turn towards ethics as the axis and pivot of the history of philosophy.[54] If all subsequent philosophers are indebted to him for this, they are equally heirs to the momentous divorce between eloquence and knowledge.[55] In the same

47 *De or.* 2.65; cf. 3.107–08; Reinhardt (2003), 3–17.

48 Cf. *Orat.* 45, *De or.* 1.138; Aristotle *Top.* I.11, 104b29.

49 *Brutus* 322.

50 Cf. e. g. *Phdr.* 266b.

51 271d1–5. Cf. *De or.* 1.87: *nisi cognosset is qui diceret quot modis hominum mentes et quibus et quo genere orationis in quamque partem moverentur*.

52 On this whole section (3.59–61) see Leeman, Pinkster and Wisse (1996), 220–38. Cf. 3.20–24.

53 *De or.* 1.42; 3. 129.

54 Cf. *Tusc. Disp.* 5.10.

55 *Tusc. Disp.* 3.72.

passage of the *De Oratore* Crassus sides against Socrates and with the great political figures, such as Themistocles and Pericles. These politicians have practiced philosophy in the way that the Seven Sages did, combining wisdom (*sapientia, prudentia*) and eloquence (*eloquentia*).[56] Cicero's praise of these political figures of Athens can be read as a reply to the virulent criticisms of them in the *Gorgias* (515b–517a). As other representatives of this practical wisdom Crassus includes Socrates' adversaries, Gorgias and Thrasymachus, as well as Isocrates, Plato's rival.[57] Like Isocrates, Cicero in the *De oratore* presupposes the value of rhetoric, taken to be the most beneficial of all the arts.[58] Cicero's proximity to Gorgias, the teacher of Isocrates, is also quite apparent. The ambitious ideal of an orator capable of speaking on all branches of human knowledge (*in omni parte humanitatis*, 1.71) recalls Gorgias' praise of the orator in *Grg*. 457a5–6.[59] According to Crassus and Cicero, however, the scope of rhetoric is not universal as the orator's training includes one of the three parts of philosophy only, namely ethics, and leaves aside logic and physics, of which he will have no more than a working knowledge (1.68–69). Cicero here moves closer to Socrates and his turn towards ethics. Still, for Cicero the utility of philosophy for the orator is rather limited. Philosophy is useful and necessary for training in argumentation, but it is not the moral or political guide Rome needs. Cicero offers a reply to the *Gorgias*' challenge by insisting that the orator's responsibilities include a concern for justice.[60] The question of the kind of moral knowledge that the ideal orator ought to possess remains. Cicero's mistrust towards philosophy rests on the assumed primacy of practical experience over theoretical pursuits and on the adaptation of Greek knowledge to the Roman tradition.[61]

The heart of the disagreement between Cicero and Plato pertains to the relationship between philosophy and the political or public sphere. Cicero rejects

56 *De or*. 3.59; 137–8. Cf. Zetzel (2003), 133.

57 *De or*. 3.59.

58 Isocrates' influence in Cicero's work has often been studied. Concerning Solon, Clisthenes, Themistocles and Pericles, see *Antidosis* 230–36 and 306–8. The view that cities have been founded by orators (*De inv*. 1.3) also goes back to Isocrates (*Antidosis* 253–56).

59 *Grg.* 457a5–6: "The orator has the ability to speak against everyone on every subject (δυνατὸς μὲν γὰρ πρὸς ἅπαντάς ἐστιν ὁ ῥήτωρ καὶ περὶ παντὸς λέγειν)". Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet*. 1355b25; 1356a33.

60 *De or.* 3.122.

61 Crassus declares (*De or.* 1.195) high and loud "I truly believe, if you look at these ultimate sources of our laws, that the little booklet of the Twelve Tables alone is weightier in authority and richer in usefulness (*et auctoriate pondere et utilitate ubertate*) than the libraries of all the philosophers." trans. May and Wisse (2001). Cf. Zetzel (2003), 131.

both the separation, typically defended by Greek philosophers, between the political life (*vita activa*) and the theoretical life (*vita contemplativa*) and the Roman opposition between public and private.[62] Oratory for Cicero is the meeting place of philosophy and political life.[63] Plato's mistake, and that of philosophers in general, consists in evading the harshness of political and judiciary practice.[64] The theoretical gap between the two thinkers can also be observed in their biographies. Plato gives up his political ambitions and his hopes for the future of Athens quite early as the *Gorgias* and the *Seventh Letter* (324a–326a) indicate. Cicero never renounces his. Moreover, contrary to Plato, he presupposes the value of political success. For Plato Socrates' fate demonstrates that it is practically impossible to participate in political life without losing one's moral integrity.[65] A passage in the *Gorgias* describing rhetorical practice very unfavourably could be read as a depiction of Cicero's political world: "oratory is used to defend injustice [...], one's own or that of one's relatives, companions, or children, or that of one's country when it acts unjustly" (480b9c3).[66] Plato's rejection of the social context is tantamount to ignoring collective common sense.[67]

Yet Cicero's reconciliation project between philosophy and rhetoric, between the private and the public spheres, appears to have its limits, in his own eyes. He admits that the language of the forum is unable to provide the vocabulary of moral philosophy.[68] In the *De officiis* (1.3–4) he makes a remark that is both personal and theoretical:

> [...] for the same man to succeed in both departments, both in the forensic style (*forense dicendi*) and in that of calm philosophic discussion (*disputandi genus*) has not, I observe, been the good fortune of any one of the Greeks so far (*nemini video Graecorum*) [...]. But let others judge how much I have accomplished in each pursuit: I have at least attempted both. I believe, of course, that if Plato had been willing to devote himself to forensic oratory, he could have spoken with the greatest eloquence and power. (trans.) Miller.

62 Cf. Schofield (2013b), 74.

63 *De nat. de.* 1; cf. Baraz (2012), 136.

64 Cf. *Orat*. 63–64.

65 *Ap*. 32a1–3. Cf. Dodds (1959), 31.

66 Cf. Fantham (2004), 56, 59.

67 See Zetzel's (2003), 135–7 enlightening comparison between Cicero's conservatism and that of Edmond Burke.

68 *De fin*. 3.4: *Ars est enim philosophia vitae, de qua disserens arripere verba de foro non potest.*

This praise of Plato (and of himself) recognizes an irreducible difference between the two kinds of discourse, namely philosophical discussion and oratory, the art of the forum. The efficacy of persuasion, in front of the crowd, does not coincide with the accuracy of thought. There seems to exist a paradox in Cicero's position. In the *De oratore*, he criticizes Socrates and the Stoic Rutilius Rufus for refusing to distinguish between two kinds of discourse, eloquence (*contentio*) and conversation (*sermo*). This results in their respective condemnations.[69] Socrates and Rutilius Rufus are criticized for discarding the *decorum* principle, that is adaptation to the context.[70] Cicero defends the necessity of practising both kinds of discourse, but admits indirectly the conflict the duality of discourses and places of discourse inevitably imply. In this, he again moves closer to Plato.

2) The *Timaeus:* Pythagoreanism and Middle Platonism

The discovery of new interest in the *Timaeus* is a significant event in the slow and obscure transition from the New Academy to Middle Platonism.[71] The Ciceronian translation of the *Timaeus* is an important part of this renewed interest. Contrary to that of the *Protagoras*, the translation of the *Timaeus* is unlikely to be a mere exercise in style. Judging from the prologue preceding it, it was meant to be part of a dialogue. But why translate a dialogue apparently foreign to the Socratic heritage and to the scepticism of the New Academy?[72] The Pythagorean influence does not seem to sit well with the neo-Academic genealogy tracing a straight line from Socrates to Plato and from Plato to Arcesilaus. As the main representative of the natural philosophers (*physici*) Pythagoras is in a certain sense the antipode of Socrates, whose questioning attitude is opposed the mere obedience to a master's *auctoritas*.[73] What is then the place of Pythagoreanism in Cicero's interpretation of Plato?

The references to Pythagoreanism, less frequent than to those to Pythagoras himself, pertain especially to number as principle of the universe, the immortality of the soul and the music of the spheres.[74] Pythagoras is regarded as the

69 *De or.* 1.227–32.

70 Cf. *Orat.* 70–71.

71 Cf. Dörrie (1971), 20–22; Tarrant (2007), 25–30. Crantor is known to have commented on several passages of *Tim.* and is regarded by Proclus (*in Tim.* I 75.30–76.10) as the first Plato commentator.

72 Cf. Giomini (1975), xvi–xvii.

73 Cf. the well-known *ipse dixit;* e. g. *De Nat. De.* 1.10.

74 *Ac.* 2.118, *Tusc. Disp.* 1.38, *De re pub.* 6.18–19 respectively.

one who coined the term φιλοσοφία.[75] In the *De finibus* (5.87) he says Plato visited Archytas at Tarentum and other Pythagoreans including Timaeus at Locri, "intending [...] to extend his studies into those branches which Socrates repudiated (*ut cum Socratem expressisset, adiungeret Pythagoreorum disciplinam eaque, quae Socrates repudiabat, addisceret*)." (trans. Rackham). In the *De republica* (1.16) he also claims, through the mouth of the venerable Scipio, that

> [...] as he [*sc*. Plato] loved Socrates with singular affection and wished to give him credit for everything, he interwove Socrates' charm and subtlety in argument with the obscurity and ponderous learning of Pythagoras in so many branches of knowledge (*leporem subtilitateque sermonis cum obscuritate Pythagorae et cum illa plurimarum artium gravitate contexuit*). (trans.) Keyes.

Cicero thus distinguishes the historical Socrates from the Platonic Socrates. Plato's work would be divided in two parts: the Socratic presented in the majority of the dialogues and the Pythagorean expounded mainly in the *Timaeus*.[76] The alliance of the Socratic and Pythagorean elements seems to constitutes what he regards as the universality of Platonic thought.[77] The renaissance of Platonism in Cicero is also a return to transcendence, envisaged as the recollection of ideas[78] and especially the "assimilation to god" as the ultimate aim of the human soul, deemed inseparable from the divine soul.[79]

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75 *Tusc. Disp.* 5.8–9 (= Heraclides Pontus fr. 88 Wehrli). Cf. D.L. 1.12. See Burkert's (1965) criticism of the authenticity of Cicero's testimony as well as its defense by Riedweg (2005), 91–94 and more fully in Riedweg (2004).

76 Hösle (2008), 153–4, 169–70. Sedley (2013), 204. According to Tarrant (2007), 29 however, the Ciceronian translation presents a cosmology that is largely freed from its specifically Platonic components and that aims at reviving the ancient Pythagoreanism of Timaeus of Locri. At any rate, Cicero's youthful translation of the astronomical poem of Aratos, which he cites at length in the *De Nat. De.* (2.104–15) demonstrates his interest in this field of knowledge, as well as the importance that Cicero attributed to the act of translation.

77 *De or*. 3.21.

78 Cf. *Tusc. Disp.* 1.57; *Orat*. 7–10. On the last passage see Gildenhard (2013), 249–53.

79 On the renewed interest for Pythagoreanism within the Platonic tradition especially at Alexandria, and more specifically for Eudoxus (c. 100–50?), see Dillon (2014), 261–63 and Flinterman (2014), 343–50. On Eudoxus' Platonism and Pythagorism with the notion of "assimilation to god" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ; cf. *Tht.* 176a) see Stobaeus' *Anthologium* 2, 49.8–12 Wachsmuth; Tarrant (2000), 67–71; Bonazzi (2013b), 168 n.25.

It is impossible to separate the questions about the date of the translation from those concerning its goals. The catalogue of *De divinatione* II (from 45) makes no mention of it either because it was not yet completed or because Cicero knew his project would remain incomplete. Various indications suggest a late date of composition as well as the likelihood that we are dealing with part of an incomplete work. In the preface to the *De finibus* (1.7), also dating from 45, Cicero notes that his writings on the Greek philosophers are not direct translations, but adds that even if he did translate them directly, his service would not be any less significant. He has not yet done (*neque adhuc*) this type of translating, but he may in the future:

> Indeed I expressly reserve the right of borrowing certain passages, if I think fit, and particularly from the philosophers just mentioned [Plato and Aristotle], when an appropriate occasion offers for so doing; just as Ennius regularly borrows from Homer, and [Scipio] Africanus from Menander. (trans.) Rackham

In addition to the practice of classicism already mentioned, this remark testifies to the possibility and legitimacy of borrowing a whole passage and inserting it in to one of his own writings.[80] Moreover in the *De natura deorum* (second half of 45) there are two references to the *Timaeus* (1.18; 30). The question of the relation between the divinity and the world unites the translation of the *Timaeus* and the *De natura deorum*.[81]

Regarding the translation itself, some of Cicero's choices are particularly telling. He omits the prologue of the Platonic dialogue (17a–27d) and with it the dramatic action. This omission is typical of a general tendency in his use of the Platonic dialogues.[82] In his preface Cicero refers to the arguments formulated in the *Academica* against the natural philosophers (*physici*). He also alludes to the conversations he had with the Pythagorean P. Nigidius Figulus (c. 100–45 BC), which were conducted in Carneades' fashion (*Carneadeo more et modo*), namely in an antilogical manner.[83] He then praises Nigidius as an expert on physical science who has given new impetus (*renovaret*) to Pythagoreanism.

80 Cf. *De fin.* 1.7; cf. 2.15.

81 On the whole context see Sedley (2013), especially 187–9.

82 In the case of the *Alcibiades I* see Renaud and Tarrant (2015), 112–19.

83 It is difficult to know whether Nigidius Figulus contributed to the rebirth of Pythagoreanism in his time, since we are dealing here with the setting of a written dialogue rather than with a straightforward remark about a contribution to the history of philosophy.

The setting is then depicted, at Mytilene in 51 BC, where Cicero meets Nigidius and Cratippus the Peripatetic en route towards Cilicia.[84]

It can plausibly be assumed that Cicero attempts in the spirit of classicism to remedy the absence of a Latin vocabulary for mathematics as employed in Platonic cosmology. In most cases Cicero first cites the Greek character before translating them: ἀναλογία (*comparatio pro portione*, 5.13), σφαιροειδές (*globosus*, 6.17),[85] μεσότης (*medietas*, 7, 23) and ἁρμονία (*concentio*, 8.27).[86] The dialogue that Cicero planned to write was likely to have a dialectical structure,[87] opposing two cosmologies, the Platonic (and Pythagorean) and the Aristotelian, defended respectively by Nigidius and Cratippus. Plato's *Timaeus*' prologue being omitted, the translation, "recited" by Nigidius, opens on the question about the origin of the universe: has the world been created or not (*oriri* = γίγνεσθαι), did it have a beginning (ἀρχή) in time? On Cicero's reading Plato defends creationism as opposed to the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternality of the world.[88]

Cicero's translation reveals neo-Academic and Stoic influences as recent studies have shown.[89] The famous phrase εἰκὸς μῦθος is rendered through a single term, *probabilia* (without *narratio*).[90] Stoic naturalism colours and limits Platonic transcendence notably with regard to the ontological dualism between model and copy. It is instructive that the Platonic phrase "so far as possible" (κατὰ δύναμιν, 30a3) is completed by the term "nature" (*quoad natura pateretur*, "so far as nature permits").[91] Transcendence is nevertheless highlighted by the notion of divine soul (*ratio et mens divina ad originem temporis*, 9.5). The divine soul in Cicero's thought is the source of both natural

84 Cicero had a deep admiration for Cratippus and entrusted him with the education of his son at Athens (*De off.* 1.1–1).

85 Cf. *De nat. de.* 2.47: *globus* for σφαίρα.

86 Lambardi (1982), 70–90; Sedley (2013), 190–92.

87 Cf. Hoenig (2013), 5, 7.

88 Sedley (2013), 197–8. Lévy (2003), 98 suggests that Cicero's *Timaeus* was meant to be the third and last part of a trilogy to which the *De natura deorum* and the *De divination* would have belonged, thus corresponding to the physical counterpart of the ethical trilogy of the *De finibus* (with its criticism of Epicureanism and Stoicism, and the defense of the Academy); this dialogue would therefore have been the crowning work of Cicero's reflections on physics. Let us recall the work in the Medieval manuscripts is entitled *De universo* or *De essentia mundi*.

89 Cf. Lévy (2003); Aronadio (2008); Hoenig (2013).

90 The choice of the antilogical debate also incorporates the Aristotelian conception of rhetoric. Cf. *Tusc. Disp.* 1.4; Hoenig (2013), 7.

91 Cf. Lévy (2003), 102.

and positive laws. The doctrine of natural law in *De legibus* (1.18–34) bears an indirect relation to the *Timaeus*, which attributes the legislative function to the demiurge[92] (41e–42d). This attribution in turn foreshadows Middle Platonic conceptions about the demiurge as law-giver.[93] Likewise in the *De republica* human beings are deemed to be divine by virtue of the fact that reason governs (*moderatur*) the body, in the same way that god governs the universe.[94] The doctrine that human being's resemblance to god (*cum deo similitudo, De leg.* 1.25) also goes back to the *Timaeus* (90c7–8), and recalls the famous formula "the assimilation to god" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, *Tht.*, 176b1–2) that would be so important in imperial Platonism.[95]

The end of the translation (47a–b) constitutes in a sense its climax.[96] God has given vision to human beings in order to guide them through the knowledge of astronomy, towards philosophy. Cicero's translation (52) is particularly accurate:

> From these things we have acquired philosophy, a good more than which none is more desirable, none more lofty has been given nor will ever be given to the race of mortals by the gods.
>
> *quibus rebus philosophiam adepti sumus, quo bono nullum optabilius, nullum praestantius neque datum est mortalium generi deorum concessu atque munere neque dabitur.*
>
> ἐξ ὧν ἐπορισάμεθα φιλοσοφίας γένος, οὗ μεῖζον ἀγαθὸν οὔτ᾽ ἦλθεν οὔτε ἥξει ποτὲ τῷ θνητῷ γένει δωρηθὲν ἐκ θεῶν. (*Tim.* 47a7–b2)[97]

This praise of philosophy reappears in very similar words in the *De legibus* (1.58) and the *Tusculan Disputations* (1.64).[98] These reoccurrences testify to the importance Cicero attributes to this praise. The divine soul and the demiurge

92 This is a term Cicero has difficulty to translate; he renders it in no less than seven different terms or circumlocutions (*is qui aliquod munus efficere molitur, artifex, effectrix, effector, genitor et effector, efficiens*); cf. Lamdardi 1982, 105–7; Tarrant (2007), 297, n.831.

93 Cf. Numenius fr. 13. Cf. Tarrant (1979) and Alcinous 16.2. See also Dillon (1993), 136–8.

94 *De re pub.* 6.26; cf. Renaud and Tarrant (2015), 115, 119–22.

95 Cicero renders the Greek terms νοῦς and νόησις by *intelligentia* (*Timaeus* 3, 10, 51).

96 See the exact parallels in *ND* 2.47.

97 Cf. Aronadio (2008), 114–16.

98 *Leg.* 1.58: *Ita fit ut mater omnium bonarum rerum sit sapientia, cuius amore Graeco verbo philosophia nomen invenit, qua nihil a dis immortalibus uberius, nihil florentius, nihil praestabilius hominum vitae datum est. Tusc. Disp.* 1.64: *Philosophia vero, omnium mater artium, quid est aliud nisi, ut Plato, donum, ut ego, inventum deorum?*

take such a place in Cicero's incomplete dialogue that Carlos Lévy argues that if completed this dialogue would have been "the first Latin Middle-Platonist text."[99] The exact nature of content of that dialogue is not easy to determine but it is part of probable truths (*probabilia*) which Cicero is inclined to accept and defend. Thus, on the whole, Cicero in his *Timaeus*, as in the case of the *De oratore*, appears to combine the neo-Academic method with a doctrinal content.

99 Lévy (2003), 107.

PART II

Early Imperial Reception of Plato

Introduction: Early Imperial Reception of Plato

Part II of this volume deals largely with the imperial period up to around 200 CE. In the comparatively stable period that was instituted by Augustus, reinforced by Vespasian and preserved by the Antonine emperors, including Marcus Aurelius Antoninus who was himself a Stoic philosopher of note, education in general flourished, being reinforced by those known as "sophists" and brought to its pinnacle in philosophy. It was generally those schools that best catered for the religious aspirations of the time that fared best, and none fared better than Platonism, not simply because of its teaching but also because of a wide awareness of the richness of Plato's dialogues. Plato was on the lips of a very wide range of educated persons, and their repeated allusions to Plato show not only their own erudition but also the literary knowledge of the audiences for which they were written. The audience members might have held the papyrus scrolls of Plato in their own hands, or listened to others reading them,[1] or even watched dramatized performances of them as a few literary and archaeological sources reveal.[2]

At the beginning of this period significant efforts were being made to offer people the tools for understanding Plato and philosophy more widely. No longer was a philosophic education mainly the prerogative of those who could afford a prolonged stay in Athens, for the Second Mithridatic War had at very least interrupted the traditional schools there, resulting in something of a philosophic diaspora. While Athens remained a centre of note, others developed, fuelled by an unprecedented demand for access to this highest form of education. Nor did the teachers in one part of the Mediterranean world wish to lose sight of developments elsewhere.

To begin the section Tarrant discusses some of the types of writing that were shaping Platonist education from early in the period. These included commentaries of texts of Plato, handbooks of Platonic doctrines, and doxographic texts, and similar passages within texts, which presented the doctrines of various schools. He discusses the part played in the revival of Platonism by figures like Posidonius, Eudorus and Thrasyllus, all of whom were seemingly influential yet difficult to understand through a lack of surviving evidence would suggest. He notes some early steps in Platonic hermeneutics, and the links already

1 For the importance of the reading of and listening to texts at gatherings see Cambron-Goulet (2012), 212–13; Porphyry (*V.Plot.*) offers a list of authors whose commentaries or exegetical works (mostly presumably on Plato and Aristotle) were read in the school of Plotinus.

2 For the evidence see Charalabopoulos (2012), 104–255.

being made between Plato and Pythagoras as a result of the *Timaeus* and its protagonist's alleged Pythagorean position.

The extensive surviving works of Philo of Alexandria already show the influence that Plato had in the Julio-Claudian era. Yli-Karjanmaa discusses Philo's project of Jewish apologetic and the nature of his own style of writing, prior to the huge part played therein by Greek philosophy and particularly Platonism. He analyzes the Platonic works that Philo appeals to most, which bear a close relation to those to which Platonist philosophers usually made appeal in the early empire. His close analysis shows how the Jewish sacred texts are what he has to explain, and Platonism one of the principal sources of his explanation, so that he is Jewish by birth but Platonist through choice.

Like Philo, Plutarch, writing in the Flavian and early Antonine eras, was much more than a Platonist, but nevertheless a central figure in the Platonic revival. Platonism, as Bonazzi explains, stood at a crossroads as if searching for a new identity. The craving for a Platonic system, particularly in metaphysics and ethics, was balanced by the consciousness that the earlier history of Plato's school had sometimes been anti-systematic if anything. As a priest at Delphi, Plutarch had a particular interest in religious philosophy, which the *Timaeus* did much to satisfy. Taking the creation there depicted more literally than most interpreters, he shows strong interest in the figure of the Demiurge and in the Ideas, while at the same time conscious of human fallibility. As Bonazzi explains, he applied the tools of scepticism to the empiricist philosophies of the Hellenistic age, and thus left room within the Platonic tradition for Arcesilaus and his successors, while seemingly committed to religious and innatist theses of his own. In this he was similar to the *Theaetetus*-commentator, who was probably close in date, but he differed in his more public mission to offer Plato's philosophy as an exemplar, and to introduce Platonic theoretical, even theological, foundations into the management of human action and the promotion of human virtue.

Active well before Plutarch's time was the Pythagorean Moderatus. While we have only a few fragments, debate has raged since Dodds (1928) over a report in Simplicius (*In Phys.* 230.36–231.7), via Porphyry, of Moderatus' theory of three Ones, and whether this is a sign of the early interpretation of three hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides* along metaphysical lines: One above Being, a One Being associated with the Forms, and a psychical one participating in the One and the Forms. Sensible particulars do not even participate. The four levels postulated must relate rather to the first (137c–142a), second (142b–155e), third + fourth (155e–159b), and fifth (159b–160b) hypotheses – with the third regarded not as a corollary to the second, as often today, but as a transition to the fourth. That is because the third introduces the One's participation in time and being at 155e, but the fourth stresses participation

in the One among the others (157c2–158b6), and also participation in limit (158d8–e4). The fifth stresses rather the *non*–participation of others in the One (159d1–d7) as also in anything else (159e6–160b1). Accordingly this schema attributed to Moderatus is not a familiar Neoplatonist one,[3] as sometimes supposed.[4] The new Apuleius text (29) shows that metaphysical interpretations of second part of the *Parmenides* were not unknown in his day even though it may have normally been seen as a logical exercise, while it is becoming increasingly clear that Gnostics held such interpretations quite early, and almost certainly by Plotinus' time.[5]

While Moderatus appears to have taken a Pythagorean approach to the *Parmenides* and presumably to other Platonic works, Theon of Smyrna seems to have remained firmly in the Platonist camp while writing his work on Plato's mathematics. As Petrucci here explains, seemingly technical in nature, Theon's *Expositio* actually represents an attempt to build up a Platonic system of mathematics, including harmonics and astronomy, by taking Plato's dialogues as basis even when mathematics since his time seemed to have made advances. Application of specific exegetical methods to select passages from the *Timaeus*, *Republic* and *Epinomis* (taken as genuine) is at the core of the work. Petrucci compares passages in Plutarch, Dercyllides, Aelianus and the Pythagorizing Platonist Nicomachus in demonstrating the range of interest in mathematical passages and in their significance in order to affirm Plato's authority also in the field of mathematics.

Plutarch lived two decades into the second century, Theon perhaps slightly later. A number of Platonist teachers who flourished in the second century have not received chapters simply because of the fragmentary nature of the material. Dillon (1977/1996) is a good place to begin for most of them, though scholarly thinking on Albinus has moved on since. Gioè (2002) contains the fragments of most of those discussed here. In the earlier years came Gaius, while Albinus was his respected successor, who was lucky enough to have taught Galen in Smyrna at around the middle of the century (1T Gioè). Both Gaius (6T, 9T) and Albinus (11–14T) are mentioned by Proclus, with the most important fragment (G9T = A14T) dealing with the different manner in which Plato expresses his doctrines in the *Timaeus* when dealing with things in generation. We see here an early case of the important principle of Platonic hermeneutics that expression changed to match the nature of things discussed. Proclus treated Albinus along with Atticus as a somewhat routine and unexciting Platonist (11T). His miniature *Prologue* is treated briefly in

3 Though Tarrant (1993), 157–61, finds a close similarity to Amelius' interpretation.

4 Hubler (2010).

5 Stover (2016), 128.

Tarrant's chapter. The Platonist Severus, from the same period, differed in important ways from other interpreters on matters of doctrine, but perhaps not on how one should read Plato.

More interesting from the point of view of Platonic reception was Calvenus Taurus, who taught Aulus Gellius in Athens, meaning that several moments from his school have been immortalized in Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*. In his case we receive insight into his in-depth approach to Pausanias' speech in the *Symposium* (*NA* 17.20 = 10T), into his reading of the "instant" at *Parmenides* 156d (7.13.11 = 11T), and into the type of material discussed in his *Commentary on the Gorgias* (7.14 = 14T). More important are his careful distinctions between various ways in which the world might be considered "generated" (*genêton*) that have been preserved for us by Philoponus, who made extensive use of a commentary on the *Timaeus* (*de Aet. Mundi* 145.1–148.25, cf. 186.17–189.9, 191.15–193.9, 223.1–223.12, 520.4–521.25).[6] The author would appear to be committed to explaining Plato in a dedicated and painstaking manner. Finally, a Taurus, said to be from Sidon, but plausibly identical with our Taurus (21F), who is elsewhere said to be from Beirut, is said to have given definitions of geometry from Plato's *Meno* (98a), Aristotle and Zeno in a *Commentary on the Republic*, but the text matches that of the anonymous *in Theaetetum* (XV) which is actually offering a definition of "simple knowledge".

Atticus, whose fragments are found in des Places (1977), is another commentator whom Proclus treats as rather dull, often associating him with Plutarch (frr. 10, 19, 22–24, 32, 35), but also with Albinus (fr. 15) and Harpocration (fr. 24). Proclus mocked him for the way in which he stuck to a rather literal reading of the text, but expressed surprise that he postulated two mixing-bowls for the mixing of soul in the *Timaeus* (fr 14). He is known principally for his work directed against Aristotle and those Platonists who embraced him, parts of which are preserved by Atticus (frr. 1–9). Harpocration was his pupil, but clearly a less literal reader of Plato, showing some signs of the more imaginative reading of the *Timaeus* that Numenius had inspired.[7] His twenty-four book *Commentary on Plato* contained material interpreting the *Phaedo, Phaedrus*, and *Alcibiades I* as well as the *Timaeus*. His theory of three gods and a double demiurge, as Proclus would have it, is recorded at *in Timaeum* I 304.22–305.6, and presumably relates to his interpretation of the *Timaeus* as well as other works.

6 Oddly this commentary has not left its mark on that of Proclus, which may mean that Porphyry saw little reason either to attack or to cite him.

7 So Dillon (1977/1996), 258–62; *contra* Boys-Stones (2012).

From the point of view of reception the part philosophical, part sophistic oeuvre and persona of Apuleius offers much more of interest than the usual teachers of Plato and Platonism, who discussed in their commentaries various details of the Platonic text without much concern either for Plato's strategies of communication or for their own opportunities to transmit the Platonic message. As Roskam shows in this volume, Apuleius has had rather a poor reputation as a philosopher, with many preferring to see him as a sophist or orator without sufficiently considering how these other parts of his persona are subsumed within his stated role as a Platonist philosopher. Roskam resists the tendency to divide Apuleius' works into literary and philosophic parts, for Apuleius is acutely conscious of language's role in the communication of philosophy as well as of the capacity of literary creations to set the mind of the reader working along lines that are ultimately fruitful from the philosophic point of view. Erudition in Apuleius is above all Platonic erudition, language serving thought. Hence Roskam says much about the *Metamorphoses* (or *Golden Ass*) as the work of a philosopher with content that has some philosophical point. The philosopher, as conceived by Apuleius and many others, was committed to searching for the ways in which an individual or a society could become better. Philosophy was not just sorting out intransigent problems in philosophy, or in the details of Platonic texts – matters relevant only to philosophic practitioners. Ethics mattered; the example of Plato's life mattered; and Plato's voice (captured in the song of the swan at the outset of the *de Platone*) also mattered. Therefore Apuleius' voice also mattered.

O'Brien here tackles the *Didaskalikos* of Alcinous, a text that has become, somewhat alarmingly, something of a canon of so-called Middle Platonism in spite of our ignorance about the author, the background to and date of the work, and the role that it is intended to play in a Platonic education. It is a handbook of Platonist doctrine, and it was never intended to focus on how Plato should be interpreted – unless of course "interpretation" is to mean no more than saying what Plato believed. O'Brien draws attention to signs of the author's admiration for Plato's contribution in the various areas of logic, and of his attribution of much of Aristotelian logical science to Plato before him. The usual reliance on the *Timaeus* and certain other favored dialogues, including the *Epinomis* (regarded as genuine by Theon and Apuleius), was to be expected, but this tendency not to stray too far from the texts (if with some linguistic *variatio*) raises questions for O'Brien about the accuracy of the author's knowledge of Plato, and a misreading of *Phaedo* 82b receives particular attention. One "hermeneutic" feature that emerges is the unwillingness of the author to make great effort to ensure that consistency is found across the handbook, allowing the apparent inconsistencies *within the corpus* to remain. This seems

somewhat unambitious, but might be being used as a lever to puzzle readers and thereby motivate them to more in-depth studies of Plato that will discuss the unity of the corpus more fully. Two areas in which O'Brien treats these problems more fully are Alcinous' account of Platonic Psychology (including epistemology) and details of his Demiurgy.

We move next from one short work whose author we know almost nothing about to a very large corpus whose author tells us much. The medical practitioner and writer Galen was one of the ancient world's star researchers, using experiment and observation on a massive scale. Yet he also wrote philosophic works, and philosophy pervades even the more technical physiological writings. Surprisingly, it was not the empirical systems that he admired, but Plato. Rocca introduces us to Galen's philosophic education and the place of Platonism within his works, drawing attention to those areas that were of real interest to him. His fascination with the details of the natural world led to a quasi-religious interest in how it could all have been designed and created to fulfill the purposes required by each of the human parts and each of the species. While other areas of Plato's philosophy were important to him, especially the partition of soul into various faculties as demanded by the *Republic*, the account of creation in the *Timaeus* and especially that of the creation of human parts (on which he wrote a commentary) was of central importance to him. So, as for Alcinous and many others, demiurgy was a topic of especial concern for him. Rocca introduces us to the distinctive variations of Platonic demiurgy favored by Galen, especially the way that the "young gods" were sidelined or regarded as mere facets of the primary demiurge. The result of these interests is that Galen's great work *On the Use of Parts* becomes an act of worship to a monotheistic deity.

We now move to a very different theology, and a completely different source of inspiration. In her entry on Numenius Athanassiadi argues that his philosophy brings together two second century trends. The first is the diminishing distance between a wide range of religious practices, on the one hand, and the practice of philosophy on the other.[8] This coincides with what may be called the "mystagogic" aspect of Plato reception. The second is the creation of dogmatic Platonism and the rejection of skeptical Academy. Athanassiadi argues that the idea that assimilation to the divine is the goal of living is central to the thought of Numenius and to his reception of Plato. Much of the apparent obscurity of Numenius' writing admits of an explanation when we realize

8 Two seminal papers exploring this trend are Brown (1971) and Fowden (1982).

that Numenius' Plato is a mystical philosopher who transmits his doctrines in a deliberately obscure manner lest they fall into the wrong hands. Moreover, Numenius' work arises from a classroom context in which he seeks to guide students to mystical experience and as a consequence adapts his images and terminology to that end. Given the variability of teaching contexts, Athanassiadi thinks it is unsurprising if Numenius' terminology is not entirely consistent. In addition Numenius feels free to interpret the mystical Plato by reference to a variety of religious traditions. Indeed Athanassiadi argues that inconsistencies in Numenius' system can be clarified by reference to the *Chaldaean Oracles* and she thinks it possible that Numenius might have played some role in the composition of these obscure hexameters. The evidence of Porphyry in *On the Cave of the Nymphs* shows us that Numenius was also concerned to reconcile his understanding of Platonism with the interpretation of Homer, as well as with Mithraism. Other features of Numenius' work, such as the doctrine of the rational and irrational soul in human beings, as well as a benign and an evil soul in the universe, betray the influence of Hermeticism and Gnosticism. Numenius' intellectual promiscuity and incorporation of Jewish and Christian elements perhaps explains why he was relatively neglected by the Neoplatonic tradition in spite of the fact that they, along with Numenius, accepted Plato as a mystagogic philosopher.

The early imperial period saw Plato grow in importance across a wide range of literature. The period is also known as "the second sophistic", a title given to it as a result of the polished literary productions, usually aimed at polished performances, achieved by a wide range of intellectuals, many of them philosophically inclined and others not. Here Fowler gives a sense of the range of literary productions and of the range of ways in which Plato was relevant. Some of the figures touched on here (Plutarch, Apuleius, Galen) are also treated more for their philosophic contributions in other chapters, but they are revisited since their omission would hinder the appreciation of this broader intellection picture, in which Plato remained important, though often for literary reasons and without necessarily involving the commitment to a Platonist stance. Plutarch's literary emulation of Plato is interesting in its own right; Apuleius is not atypical of the "sophists" of the period even when cultivating his philosophic image; Galen had literary and performative ambitions as well as purely medical ones. Among figures treated only in this chapter are Dio Chrysostom, the polished Greek sophist; Aristides to whom we should rather give the name of "orator"; Maximus of Tyre, author of philosophic orations for a less philosophic clientele; Lucian the irreverent author of satirical sketches reminiscent of Platonic dialogues in their literary form and their allusions, used for parody rather than

authority; Justin Martyr, who employs a Platonist education and the dialogue form for Christian ends; and Longus, representative of the Greek novelists whose work had Platonic undertones and employed Platonic allusions.

The breadth of Fowler's chapter should not lull one into the premature belief that the second century reception of Plato has been treated exhaustively here. The path towards Neoplatonism is already being set by a variety of responses to Numenius, from that of his friend Cronius to the Chaldaean Oracles and beyond. The path towards the Platonizing treatises of the Sethian Gnostics (to be discussed by Turner) is already under way in other Gnostic sects and perhaps the Hermetic Corpus. The thirst for Plato went far beyond those with literary and philosophic ambitions. It may be timely, in anticipation of Addey's chapter later, to note that Diogenes Laertius, the writer of philosophic lives, while himself inclining towards Epicureanism, reveals at 3.47 that he is in fact writing for a lady, who is herself quite appropriately a lover of Plato who zealously seeks his doctrines. He reveals that he prefers to append to his biography of Plato a brief account of the nature of his writings, the order of the dialogues and his method of induction, rather than to go into the details of his doctrines – which would be like offering "an owl to Athens" (or "coals to Newcastle") if offered to one who knew them as well as she did. We have evidence mainly for the reception of Plato by the writers themselves. But each of the writers whom we have tackled had his audience, which also plays a part in determining the prominence of Plato.

Finally, let us affirm that the division of this book into three parts does not imply that there is any distinct break or radical change in the reception between the final article of one part and the first of the next. Numenius is an influential thinker whose study is essential for the study of Christian Platonism through Origen and of Neoplatonism through Amelius and Porphyry. The dates of many of the religious manifestations of Platonism are not able to be determined with precision. If there is the suggestion of a hiatus between the last of the so-called "Middle Platonists" and the pupils of Ammonius Saccas it is not because Plato's dialogues stopped being read and debated.

CHAPTER 5

From Fringe Reading to Core Curriculum: Commentary, Introduction, and Doctrinal Summary

Harold Tarrant

I The Problem

Platonic philosophy would become much more central in the early empire than in the discussions that inspired Cicero's philosophic oeuvre. There had then been little evidence of debate about how to read Plato, even though whether he was a doctrinal thinker was already keenly contested. Moreover, he tended to be seen rather as a philosopher with powerful insights rather than as the promoter of a system that could rival those created by the Aristotelians, Epicureans and Stoics.

The Platonic revival that was becoming evident in the early part of the imperial period is poorly documented, but, whatever one thinks of the challenging blend of philosophy and Jewish teaching, it is clear that Plato was again a force to be reckoned with by Philo of Alexandria; the same impression emerges in the letters of the Stoic statesman Seneca. In Plutarch, towards the middle of the period, we find an intellectual giant who considers himself as part of the Platonic tradition, both literary and philosophical. A little later Apuleius, who acknowledges a debt to Plutarch as well as to Plato, experiments with a many literary forms, conveying messages whose Platonist content is sometimes overt and sometimes carefully concealed. Lucian uses the dialogue-form with great subtlety, aware that he borrows from Plato, but promotes no doctrine. Meanwhile, Platonic teaching flourished in philosophic schools, mostly involving a teacher versed in the reading of Plato and a relatively small circle of devotees. Platonic texts were read with the class, and the teacher offered assistance in understanding the philosophy and the nuances of the Greek, criticizing those who read the text differently. The *Attic Nights* of Aulus Gellius, who studied with the Platonist Taurus in Athens, enrich our knowledge of the procedures of the schools and of the local intellectual scene more generally.[1]

1 See Dillon (1977/1996), 237–47, for Taurus, including the evidence for his school; the testimony is to be found in Lakmann (1995) and in Gioè (2002).

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So Plato had become "core curriculum" by the second century. Without some knowledge of Plato much literature of the early imperial period could not be fully appreciated. Thus much ink would be spilled with the aim of developing and reinforcing people's knowledge of Plato, often expecting an understanding of Platonic philosophy to induce a commitment to it. Platonic revival required the dissemination of texts, assistance in reading them, summaries of Platonic doctrine for those without time for reading or being read to, and guidance about what was important. Ultimately they would also need reasons to prefer what they found in Plato to other available philosophies.

The period when most of the necessary Platonist "infrastructure" developed needs to be pieced together carefully from our meager resources. Many of the relevant names are either lost or disputed, and other figures described as "Academics" or "Platonics" are little more than names, with no reliable information about their dates or where they worked. Nor can we be certain that all-important contributors had a primary allegiance to Plato, as will emerge. We often find it difficult to discuss written material in depth without knowing something about the conditions that have influenced their author. Yet there are texts that have a considerable bearing on the reviving Platonism between Cicero and Plutarch, and it would be a dereliction of duty to omit them.

II The Commentary-like Works

The commentary would become the primary vehicle for recording the essence of Platonic and of Aristotelian studies in late antiquity, whether we are dealing with notes taken by a pupil or recorder at the teacher's lectures, his own lecture notes, or a more polished version revised in the light of class discussion. From the reading of texts within the schools the Platonic commentary, sometimes general and sometimes specializing in particular kinds of issue, was either instituted or revived,[2] and ultimately evolved as the major vehicle for Platonist teaching. We know what a Platonic commentary could look like by the second century CE from papyri, all of unknown authorship. The anonymous *commentary on Plato's Theaetetus* is the most substantial, but in the same Part III of the *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini* we also find brief fragments of what appear to be second century commentaries on the *Alcibiades I* and *Statesman*.

2 It is difficult to know what form the exegetical work of the Old Academic Crantor or the Stoic Posidonius would have taken. Both are known from Plutarch's treatise *An. Procr.*, which has some commentary-like features.

A portion of the Platonic text (the *lemma*) is cited, and then explained by means of paraphrase and the exposition of relevant doctrine, including that of other schools where appropriate. One cannot determine from the papyri how much of these dialogues the commentaries covered, but we know from many sources that commentaries were often partial, covering only what the teacher saw fit.

In the *Theaetetus*-commentary (PBerol inv. 9782) cross reference is made to the author's commentaries on *Timaeus* and *Symposium* (XXXV 10–12, LXX 10–12), and to one that readers have not yet encountered on the *Phaedo* (XLVIII 7–11).[3] The term used is each case is *hypomnêmata*, literally "reminders". While all the author's four known commentaries may have covered nearly the whole dialogue, we can infer from IV 23–27 that prefatory material in the dialogues, allegedly concerned with appropriate behavior, was thought not to require interpretation. In fact we know that everything prior to *Timaeus* 27b, embracing the summary of the Socratic state and the whole story of Solon's hearing about Atlantis, were omitted from Severus' commentary in the second century.[4] Galen wrote a commentary on parts of *Timaeus* with medical implications because they too were ordinarily omitted. One wonders how much the anonymous author's commentary on *Symposium* had tackled, given that the philosophical content is meager in some sections. His commentary also offers insights into previous interpretations of the *Theaetetus* (II 11–39), which testify to a lively debate about the intentions of the work well before the time of writing, and *a fortiori* before this neatly presented scribal copy in circulation by about 150 CE.

There are three important names in the history of commentary–like Platonic exegesis from Cicero's time to Plutarch's youth. The first is the Stoic polymath Posidonius (died c. 51 BCE). Plutarch refers to those who adopted his position on the construction of the Platonic world-soul at *Timaeus* 35a–b in his essay *On the Procreation of Soul in the Timaeus*.[5] Sextus Empiricus cites Posidonius' discussion of like-by-like cognition from a work that interpreted the *Timaeus* (*Adv. Math.* 7.93 = F85), plausibly 35a–b again but in conjunction with 37a–c. Sextus' evidence occurs in his discussion of the Pythagoreans, immediately after a quotation from Empedocles;[6] and Theon (*Expos.* 103 = F291)[7] introduces his remark on the significance of the seven numbers featuring in the

3 The author of the commentary on the *Alcibiades* likewise refers (fr. A II 4–6) to his discussion of mirror-images in a commentary on *Tim.*, and presumably to a detailed treatment of 46a–c.

4 See Proclus *in Tim.* I 204.16–18 = 3T Gioè.

5 On this passage (1023b = F141a) see Ju (2013).

6 The same quotation occurs below in his treatment of Empedocles (7.121), shortly after another reference to the *Timaeus* (7.119).

7 For comment see Petrucci (2012), 424–5.

construction of the soul at 35b–c. Since one cannot say why Posidonius should have read a large section of *Timaeus* with students, the exegesis probably pertains to a narrower topic, involving the Platonic world-soul, making reference to possible forerunners in the Pythagoreans and Empedocles.

The next figure, who featured more widely in Plutarch's discussion of the world-soul (*De Animae Procreatione* 1013b, 1019e, 1020c), is Eudorus of Alexandria, whom sources describe as an "Academic", though he is not among and the named students of either Philo, Antiochus, or other prominent Academics in Philodemus' account (*Index Ac.* XXXIV–XXXV). Hence it is natural to place Eudorus' *floruit* in the second half of the first century rather than before. The fragments do not easily combine to offer a coherent picture of his philosophy, and we cannot tell whether the work Plutarch made use of is a commentary, but it was exegetical in nature and also made reference to Old Academic interpretations of Xenocrates and Crantor. He claimed that on 35a–b neither party was "without a share in likelihood" (*amoirein tou eikotos*, 1013b), which shows him applying the same standard of plausibility to interpretation that had originally been employed by "Timaeus" (*Tim.* 29c, 30b etc.).[8] He followed Crantor also regarding the importance of the number 384 at 35b–36b (1020c).

The third figure is Potamo of Alexandria, who flourished in the Augustan age, calling his own philosophy "Eclectic" (D.L. 1.21), but failed to leave a lasting school.[9] The Suda claims that he wrote a commentary on the *Republics* (Πολιτεῖαι, plural), and it may either have tackled specific issues within the *Republic*,[10] or have compared the constitutions of the *Republic* and *Laws*.[11] In any case he engaged in Platonic exegesis, and like Posidonius and Eudorus he did so without being referred to as a "Platonic". The first extant works of Platonic exegesis were Plutarch's *Quaestiones Platonicae* and *De Animae Procreatione*, and the first substantial piece of running commentary is the anonymous *in Theaetetum*.[12]

8 Plutarch equates *to eikos* with *to pithanon* here at 1013b, at *De cohibenda ira* 558d, and at *Quaest. conv.* 728f; he uses similar terminology reminiscent of the New Academy when engaging Crantor and Eudorus, for at 1020d he talks about what gave Crantor's party (among whom he has explicitly included Eudorus) its reasonableness (*to eulogon*), a criterion especially associated with Arcesilaus (Sextus Empiricus *PH* 7.158). This term (neuter with the article) recurs in Plutarch only at *De sera* 550b. Hence Plutarch may treat Eudorus as somehow *between* the Old and New Academies.

9 On Potamo see Hatzimichali (2011).

10 Like many others from Dercyllides (perhaps close in date), whose discussion of the Myth of Er is quoted by Theon (*Expos.* 198–204).

11 On the possibilities see Tarrant (2012).

12 These works are discussed by Bonazzi in this volume. For a list of the ancient commentators on various Platonic works see Dörrie-Baltes (1993), 28–54.

III Introductions to Reading Plato

Exegesis of an author only flourishes when a number of people seek to understand the texts in question. A reading public with a level of curiosity is therefore presupposed. It is also likely that the texts have generated important controversy, so that settling interpretative issues impacts upon other wider disputes. Exegesis assists in reducing the perplexity of those curious readers, but what of those who wished to become readers but did not know where to begin? There are many dialogues in the Platonic corpus, *Parmenides* for instance or *Critias*, that would be an inappropriate starting point, and others that may not be authentic. Would it not be best to seek first the advice of an experienced reader?

The court intellectual of the emperor Tiberius, Thrasyllus, made an arrangement of the corpus of Democritus, seemingly placing fifty-two works in thirteen groups of four, but leaving a few in no particular order (D.L. 9.45–48). The work that did so was *Matters prior to the reading of Democritus' books* (9.41); the whole arrangement began with an ethical work entitled *Pythagoras*, reflecting the suspicion that Pythagoras was the primary influence on Democritus. He also arranged Plato's works in nine such tetralogies, beginning with four largely ethical works on the events leading to the death of Socrates. It is a reasonable inference that he also wrote about *Matters prior to the reading of Plato's books*, used by Diogenes at 3.1 and 3.56–57, if not more widely. I argued in 1993 that Thrasyllus' introduction was the source of the bulk of 3.48–66 (excluding two snippets from Favorinus), but in any case this passage provides us with an excellent example of what an introduction to the dialogues in the tradition of Thrasyllus might have included.[13]

I summarized the contents of this passage roughly as follows:

48	The history and nature of the dialogue
49–51a	The types of Platonic dialogue
51b	Is Plato an expounder of doctrine?
52	Which characters Plato uses for expounding doctrine, and which for refuting falsehoods
53–55	Some specific types of Platonic argument
56	Two comparisons with tragedy, one on the perfection of philosophic discourse by Plato, one involving the significance of groups of four; Thrasyllus directly credited with the second

13 Although Diogenes might not be writing until early in the third century, the second century had seen a tendency to question Thrasyllus' arrangement, and other ways of ordering the dialogues.

57–61a	The tetralogical arrangement of the corpus explained
61b–62a	The trilogies of Aristophanes of Byzantium
62b	The works with which teachers and others begin
62c	Acknowledged spuria
63–64	Problems with Plato's use of terminology
65a	The tasks of the exegete
65b–66a	Explanation of the marginal signs in available copies
66b	Antigonus on the fees paid to consult an early edition

Hence we move from the dialogue form (48–51a) to its various philosophic uses in Plato (51b–52); to the less familiar type of argument that he uses (53–55); to reasons for and details of the tetralogical arrangement (56–61a); to different reading strategies and a degree of agreement on spurious works (61b–62); to difficulties confronting the inquisitive reader and helpful conventions (63–66a); to a reminder that readers have not always been able to read Plato so freely. All such material could naturally be included in an introduction to the reading of the dialogues, though the reference to controversy about whether Plato expounded doctrine was at least a century out of date in Diogenes' day, and such an introduction was better suited to a time when the task of reading Plato was less familiar. Furthermore, it is clearly an introduction to the Platonic tetralogies as Thrasyllus conceived them.

An introduction of this kind clearly had implications for Platonic reception. Already in the division of the dialogues according to eight types or "characters" we meet a basic distinction between dialogues intended to be instructive and those conducting an inquiry.[14] The instructive dialogues are divided according to content, into theoretical (physical or logical) and practical (ethical or political);[15] the inquisitive ones according to their function, into those aiming at exercise (testing or practicing midwifery) or competition (tripping up or exposing opponents).[16] Conceivably the division had originally been applied to

14 Anon. *in Tht.* LIX 12–21 affirms that Plato (or Socrates) "in his inquiries" does not reveal his opinion or affirm the truth or falsehood of anything, though experienced readers can detect his opinion; however, Plato does at times declare his doctrines (LV 8–13).

15 There is tension between this fourfold division of subject matter and the tripartition of philosophy credited to Plato at 3.56, but four-fold divisions of both basic types of dialogue would surely have appealed to Thrasyllus.

16 *Tht.* suggests these distinctions, for it distinguishes mere "testing" from "practising midwifery on" young men at 157c4–9; it distinguishes tripping opponents from exposing their errors at 167e3–168a2.

types of *discourse* rather than whole dialogues,[17] which seldom fit one "character" throughout. However, "characters" are attributed to each of the dialogues of the tetralogical corpus both at 3.50–51 and at 3.58–61,[18] probably out of a desire to be systematic. It is noticeable that Thrasyllus' tetralogies five to seven contain eleven of the fifteen "inquisitive dialogues", whereas tetralogies one to three contain only two of them, and eight and nine contain none.[19] Thrasyllus may have tried to partially synthesize pre-existent elements of the tetralogical system and of the character-classification into a satisfying reading order. We have no overall account of the rationale behind the arrangement, but he saw the first tetralogy as having the common purpose of outlining the philosophic life (3.57), and the second as being an ordered epistemological sequence.[20] The whole would appear to owe much to exegetical considerations.

Whether or not Thrasyllus is also behind the statement of the interpreter's tasks, it is of some importance for the Platonism of the period. One must explain *what* is being said, a task that often involves paraphrase in the anonymous *Theaetetus*-commentary.[21] One must explain *why* it is being said, which explains the frequency of the explanatory conjunction *gar* in that and similar texts, and involved context and character; and one must affirm whether it is *rightly* said. If a serious suggestion had come from the protagonist, then this would regularly involve a positive assessment from a *Platonist* commentator, but early exegetes without a primary allegiance to Plato[22] might have disagreed even with Socrates and Timaeus.

The Platonist Albinus, who had a fine reputation when Galen sought philosophical instruction (T1 Gioè = *Lib. Propr.* 98.8–11 Müller), has left us a diminutive *Prologus*, which was also intended to introduce the reading of Plato. The question of the order in which Platonic works were tackled remained an issue, still liable to be discussed in a *prefatory* work, and Theon of Smyrna[23] is also known to have treated this topic. But while Albinus' work does reflect the reader's need for appropriate background material, his fifth chapter actually

17 It is introduced in the manuscripts as a division of λόγος rather than διάλογος, but dialogues were already classified under these headings in Albinus (*Prologus* 3) c. AD 150.

18 The *Critias* is treated inconsistently: first as "political" then as "ethical".

19 The final dialogue of T7 is *Menexenus* (ethical); *Euthyd.* and *Tht.* (T1.1 and T2.2) are both "peirastic"; T4 seems something of a mixture.

20 Sedley (2009).

21 See on this Sedley (1997), 115–16.

22 Besides Posidonius and Potamo we can add the Peripatetics Xenarchus (Proclus, *in Tim.* I 425.22) and Adrastus, who also wrote on *Timaeus* (Porphyry, *Harm.* 96.1–6).

23 Tackled below by Petrucci; the evidence come from the *Fihrist* of al-Nadim.

undermines discussions of reading programs by arguing that different reading programs are appropriate for different pupils: those who encounter Plato differ in natural ability, age, the aim of their studies, their preparation, and their background circumstances. While this recognition was used to justify different reading sequences, it might also have questioned whether studying Platonic texts directly, aided by the teacher's commentary (oral or written), was the best way forward for all pupils.

IV Doctrinal Summaries

If one lacked leisure or ability then perhaps it would be better to have Plato's doctrines ready-packaged in a neat handbook such as those by Apuleius (*De Platone* books I–II) and Alcinous; or if one needed to know something of the content of individual dialogues then perhaps it would be more feasible to read summaries of them such as were offered by Galen and, as now seems the case,[24] by Apuleius.

Diogenes Laertius' second appendix to his *Life of Plato* (3.67–80) takes the form of a brief collection of principal doctrines, first on psychology and natural philosophy extracted almost exclusively from the *Timaeus* (3.67–77), then a chapter and a half on ethics, two sentences on dialectic, and finally a little on divine punishments and the purpose of Plato's myths – a very modern topic.[25] It seems to have been standard when writing briefly on Plato's doctrines to employ the *Timaeus* much more fully and directly as a source than any other dialogue,[26] resulting in an imbalance – as well as the assimilation of Plato and Pythagoras in the readers' minds.

While it may have become common to combine a biography of Plato with an outline of his doctrine (as in Diogenes and Apuleius), this does not mean that doctrinal discussions were necessarily lightweight. It seems that Albinus himself wrote at least three books *On Plato's Views*, and eleven of *Outlines of Platonic Doctrines*,[27] so a decision to write about doctrines does not involve

24 Stover (2016).

25 The answer (3.80) also seems to be modern, appealing to uncertainty rather than to doctrine, if texts are sound.

26 The *Timaeus*' status as Plato's only dialogue on natural philosophy facilitates this, as also the lack of internal discussion; the tendency is seen in Alcinous, *Didasc.* 166.39–176.34 and Apuleius, *De Platone* 1.5–18 190–218, going back as far as Cicero's source at *Ac.* 1.24–29.

27 *Peri tôn Platôni areskontôn* and *Hypotyposeis Platônikôn dogmatôn* Parisinus Graecus 1962 fol. 146v, T4 and T6 Gioè.

catering for people without time to read the original. Rather it shows a growing appetite for in-depth discussion of the Platonic system itself, and indeed Middle Platonists are usually seen as further systematizing Plato,[28] thus building on the work of Xenocrates. Such a view, if not obvious in all Plutarch's dialogues and essays, accords well with the content of texts like Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* or the Pseudo-Plutarchian *On Fate*, which weaves two types of fate and three levels of fate as substance into a multi-layered metaphysical scheme accommodating providence and law.[29] Doctrinal systems did not need to be elementary, and even shorter presentations of doctrine were not necessarily elementary,[30] since presenting a concise but accurate collection of doctrines could present as many difficulties as writing an effective commentary.

Doctrinal summaries often constituted part of more prolonged discussion of a particular issue, as they had done in Cicero, though usually not Plato's, since Plato had not been seen as adopting a confident doctrinal system. Even the summary of doctrine offered by Varro in the *Academica* had been presented as something characteristic of Plato's early followers irrespective of their schools. Those who saw the dialogues engaging directly in teaching, however, were at greater liberty to identify a Platonic position on various issues. This could include not only those who expressed allegiance to Plato, but also rivals who wanted to compare that position with their own. One might include here the Stoic Seneca, whose *Epistles* 58 and 65 present Plato's alleged six-fold division of things-that-are (*ta onta*) and five-fold division of causes respectively; and the Pyrrhonist Skeptic Sextus Empiricus, who offers a highly contentious account of Plato's position on the criteria of knowledge at *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.141–4. Both rely on *Timaeus* 27d–28a, and may ultimately be dependent on material within the exegetical tradition from Crantor on, but that is where the similarity ends. Though Sextus writes perhaps at the end of the second century CE, and Seneca in the middle of the first, the former seems to use materials that derive from a period of Platonic studies antedating the material used by Seneca, which already speaks of Idea-Paradigms and has a broadly "Middle Platonist" character that Sextus' material lacks. Two centuries have by-passed him.[31]

28 See for example Bonazzi (2013b) on Eudorus.

29 As Dillon notes (1977), 321 the author brings in references to three passages of Plato *Phdr.* 248c, *Tim.* 41e, and *Rep.* 617d; it is remarkable that these remain central to the topic, again converging in Proclus' discussion of fate at *in Tim.* III 274.12–26.

30 Tarrant (2010).

31 Antiochus of Ascalon, Posidonius, and Asclepiades of Bithynia are the latest sources mentioned in the wider doxography.

This should alert us to an important feature of doxographies, these summaries of parts of the theory of one or more earlier philosophers often found embedded in broader philosophical works – they may be reliant on material that had been recycled for centuries. That would perhaps be true of the collection of Platonic doctrine in Diogenes Laertius (3.67–80).

While doxographies, literally the recording of opinions, were often employed early in the course of wider studies to provide a historical context, some whole works set out simply to record a range of opinions on a long list of topics, and might have prepared the way either for other philosophic works or for other authors to use the material in constructive ways, whether philosophic or rhetorical. An early example of the genre was Theophrastus' *Physikai Doxai* or *Opinions on Natural Philosophy*, but the most important has come to us under the name "Aetius", the assumed origin of overlapping doxographic material in (a) Stobaeus and (b) Pseudo-Plutarch. Aetius has recently become the subject of an intensive study by Mansfeld and Runia,[32] who cite an epitaphic epigram from Thessalonica dating from 40–50 CE, a date that feels about right for this figure.[33] Doxographic work could have various uses, among them the documentation of the variety of philosophic opinion and the provision of a handy reference-tool. The first of these might involve questioning the reliability of philosophy as a whole,[34] while the second would assist writers wishing to infuse their work with philosophical references without accessing all the literature directly.

A more certain date for Aetius might have made it safer to use his doxographic reports as crucial evidence for the development of Platonic interpretation.[35] Since it is natural philosophy that was until then the principal concern of the doxography, it is no surprise that interpretation of the *Timaeus* far outweighed the influence of any other dialogue. The exegetical contributions of Posidonius and Eudorus have probably been taken into consideration, and the last thinker mentioned in the doxography, Xenarchus the Peripatetic of the Augustan age, also published views on parts of the *Timaeus*.[36] He had been talking

32 See Mansfeld and Runia (1997), (2009) and (2010).

33 Mansfeld and Runia (1997), 322–3.

34 Mansfeld and Runia (1997), 191, note that Ps.-Plutarch preserves Aetius' habit of contrasting conflicting opinions (or διαφωνίαι), allowing them to become a principle of organization in their reconstruction. cf. (2009), 7–10, 280.

35 Aetius is only mentioned once each in the text and notes of Dillon (1977/1996). Boys-Stones (2017) makes greater use of him.

36 For Xenarchus see Proclus, *in Tim.* I 425.22; it is evident that he commented on the text at 30c5–7, introducing later material from 39e–40a, dealing with an unmistakably Platonic topic; on Xenarchus see Falcon (2013).

of "pre-existent intelligible causes", of "paradigms", and of genus and species, and thus seems to work comfortably within a Platonic metaphysical system. So it seems did Aetius, who includes the Ideas along with a divine intelligence and matter among three principle of the Platonic universe (I 3.21),[37] regarding these three as causes "by which", "out of which" and "in conformity with which" (cf. I 10.2), with the first (i. e. the Platonic demiurge) as the principal cause. The same passage (cf. also I 10.3) regards the Ideas as an incorporeal essence in the thoughts and mental pictures of god, perhaps a typical way of explaining the Platonic Ideas in the time of Seneca (*Ep.* 65.7), and one that will continue to recur in authors like Alcinous (*Did.* 9, 163.14–15 etc.) and to influence others like Nicomachus of Gerasa (*Introductionis arithmeticae libri duo* 1.4.2). Accordingly god himself is an intellect (I 7.31 and 10.3).

From such material in Aetius, and other texts that may have been roughly contemporary, it has long been obvious that interesting developments had been going on in Platonism that were not clearly documented in Cicero's extant writings. The new trends may be connected with a more scholarly approach to the *Timaeus*, whether as a Platonic or a Pythagorean text, and with a greater interest in reconciling various texts of Plato that tackled similar subjects from different points of view. In this context we should consider a text in Stobaeus, where the last author to have been named was Eudorus.[38] In his *Anthology* (2.7.2), after dealing with Philo of Larissa's division of philosophy, he next praises Eudorus' *Division of Philosophic Discourse* as a book well worth obtaining. A little later we meet the following:

> Ethical discourse is divided into these and similar topics. One should now begin with the various issues, giving precedence to the types in accordance with the arrangement that seems right to me, the one I believe to have been divided to promote better clarity.

Thereafter, in accordance with Eudorus' division, Stobaeus moves straight on to consider the goal or *telos* of moral philosophy (2.7.3a), and it is clear that he is drawing on an extensive treatment. After discussion of various meanings of the word, comes a treatment of its specifically philosophic sense, which moves from the Stoics, to the younger Peripatetics, Epicureans, and the earlier history of this sense of the term, bringing in Homer and Plato (*Tim.* 90d5, *Prot.*

37 Reluctantly I base my references on Diels (1879), in spite of shortcomings identified by Mansfeld and Runia.

38 Evidence for Eudorus is disparate and highly controversial; Dillon (1977/1996), 114–35 remains worth reading, and for a very different approach see Bonazzi (2005).

354d2–8). He moves to consider the secondary *telos* or *hypotelis* and happiness (*eudaimonia*), which he treats as virtually equivalent to the *telos*, but this requires an additional division, into psychical, bodily and mixed goals. He then privileges the proponents of a psychical goal, first Homer, and then Socrates and Plato who are conceived as following Pythagoras in making assimilation to god the goal (2.7.3f). The "following of god" proposed by Pythagoras is seen as involving an intelligible god and "a harmonic [principle] of cosmic order", which reminds one of the world-soul of the *Timaeus*, while Plato is seen as treating the goal in three ways *corresponding with the division of philosophy* (which is thus reminiscent of Eudorus' title), in physical and Pythagorean mode in *Timaeus* (90a–d), in ethical mode in *Republic* (613a–b), and in dialectical mode in *Theaetetus* (176b); and less directly at *Laws* 715e–716a, which again recalls Pythagoras.

The collection of different ways in which Plato approached the *telos* overlaps with chapter 28 of Alcinous, who quotes some of the material, and indeed Stobaeus also quotes *Tim.* 90d5–7. The variety of expression leads to the observation, shortly to be repeated (2.7.4a), that Plato is "of many voices, not of many opinions", clearly a vital hermeneutic assumption that paves the way for early imperial attempts to forge a single system out of the apparent variety of his works. It looks like a relatively new assumption, for at 2.7.4a we read "not as some people believe of many opinions". In such passages Stobaeus' source, whether or not Eudorus, feels a strong affinity with Plato, and his desire to document how different dialogues tackle things differently also suggests allegiance to Plato. In this section, dealing with Plato's classifications of goods, he quotes *Laws* 631b6–d2, and then discusses a two-fold division into divine and human goods, a threefold one into psychical, corporeal and external goods, and a five-fold one from *Philebus* 66a6–c7, interpreted as involving:

1. The Idea of the Good, divine and transcendent;[39]
2. The combination of wisdom and pleasure "that some consider the human good";[40]
3. Wisdom in its own right;
4. The combination of knowledge and craft;
5. Pleasure in its own right.[41]

39 It is entirely possible that the term ἰδέαν was present in the text used at 66a8.

40 While it is unclear whether Plato is thought to posit such a "human good", the words suggest that the second good at 66b1–3 was being interpreted as the life of mixed wisdom and pleasure, which was agreed to suit a human as opposed to a god (22a–c; 33b).

41 Almost certainly not any kind of pleasure, but true pleasure without admixture of pain.

Book I of *Laws* and the *Philebus* are named as the principal sources for this material, and a list of dialogues named between 2.7.3f and 2.7.4b includes *Laws* (4 times, books I and IV), *Philebus* (1), *Republic* X (1), *Theaetetus* (1), and *Timaeus* (4). The interpreter responsible relishes the tougher and lengthier dialogues even as sources for ethical philosophy, a tendency that persists throughout early imperial Platonism. However, the principle that Plato does not disagree with himself in different dialogues has no exceptions; hence there is no attempt to dissociate "Socratic" from "Platonic" works even though it seems that the Pythagorean voice of "Timaeus" and Plato's own voice in the *Laws* are privileged as doctrinal statements. One reason why this interpreter has paid special attention to *Philebus* and *Laws* I is his special interest in how pleasure and reasoning relate to one another in the good life, pleasure and pain being seen as sources of happiness when reasoning confines them to the appropriate occasions and appropriate levels. So in a way they come together, while in another way,[42] he claims, Plato "located the leading good that was choice-worthy in its own right in the process of reasoning well (*eulogistia*), while in pleasure he located the supervenient good (*epigennêmatikon*), which he too regards synonymously as joy (*khara*) and freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*), from what is consequent upon it (*ex epakolouthêmatos*)." In these remarkable words we find Aristotle's concept of pleasure as a supervenient end (*epigignomenon telos*, *EN* 10.4, 1174b33) accredited to Plato, together with the Stoic wise man's joy (*khara* – a rare but good Platonic word) and Epicurean freedom from disturbance.[43] It seems that Plato has been credited with prior knowledge of distinctive elements in the theories of pleasure of subsequent schools.

So Plato not only brings to perfection ideas anticipated by Socrates and Pythagoras, he also inspires subsequent philosophic schools. The writer knows Aristotle reasonably well, treats him with respect, allows some agreement with Plato, and trusts the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a source for Eudoxus. The Peripatetic Strato is also mentioned, while at 2.7.3i Democritus too is found to be in broad agreement with Plato about certain aspects of happiness. The spotlight, however, remains firmly on Plato, and the other material is there to enhance his authority and that of pre-Hellenistic philosophy more generally.

Regardless of whether the writer is Eudorus, the passage in Stobaeus sits comfortably between Cicero and early imperial Platonism. For the first time,

42 At the end of 2.7.3i. For καθὰ read κατ᾽ ἄλλο.

43 The word *ataraxia* is of course not found in Plato, but the writer is more interested in the concept, and perhaps by the idea of ἡδονὰς … ἀλύπους found at *Phlb.* 66c4, the passage that is about to be cited. The term χαρά had also been found at *Phlb.* 19c7 and, perhaps more importantly, *Leg.* II 654a5.

perhaps, we see not only that scholarly attitude towards Plato and especially towards the later dialogues, but, more importantly for the present volume, we also see the emergence of a hermeneutic principle, demanding that all Platonic affirmations should be reconciled.

V Conclusion

Before the time of Plutarch thinkers of various persuasions had been instrumental in making new resources available to the would-be reader of Plato, including exegetical works often with a commentary-like character, introductory material and collections of doctrines, sometimes but not always combined with similar materials for other philosophers. No matter how basic this material might seem, it usually had implications for the interpretation of Plato and thus could play its part in shaping the Platonism that followed.

One feature recurs in all these genres, and that is the assimilation of Plato to Pythagoras, partially but not wholly resulting from the *Timaeus*. The period seems to have given rise to various Pythagorean works, from "Timaeus Locrus" on physics, to Ps.-Archytas *On Categories*, to a host of ethical fragments attributed to persons with Pythagorean names but bearing the hallmark of post-Classical philosophy. Sometimes the figures we have examined may have been seriously confused by pseudo-Pythagorean material. At other times they simply accepted that the *Timaeus* and perhaps some other works represented Plato working in Pythagorean mode. The trend continued, through Numenius, into late antiquity.

Unfortunately the very nature of this work is such that the names of the principal persons involved have seldom made an impact on later sources. However, the texts that we do have can easily be explored for their approach to the reception of Plato even when we have to make educated guesses about the names of those who wrote them.

CHAPTER 6

Philo of Alexandria

Sami Yli-Karjanmaa

I Introduction: Philo and His Project

The Jewish exegete Philo of Alexandria's (c. 20 BCE to c. 50 CE) debt to Plato is enormous.* Philo's central project, the allegorical interpretation of the five books of Moses in the Septuagint, would be inconceivable without the contribution of the Athenian philosopher, and Greek culture in general.[1] Philo's relation to his two-fold heritage has given rise to debates for centuries.

Before we look at the different ways Philo utilizes Plato in his project, it is warranted to briefly outline his enterprise. Most of his ca. 40 surviving works, written in Attic-influenced Greek, deal with interpreting the Pentateuch and belong to one of three different commentary series.[2] (1) In the *Quaestiones* (sc. *in Genesim* and *in Exodum*) Philo goes through the biblical text verse by verse presenting questions about the meaning, and answering both on the basis of the literal and then concerning the allegorical interpretation. The *Quaestiones* is probably the series he wrote first.[3] (2) Almost half of Philo's works belong to what is called the *Allegorical Commentary* (on Genesis). The literal meaning is here mostly just the starting point for allegories of often considerable complexity the main subject of which is the human soul. There are signs (e. g., references to initiates) that this series was intended for a select audience only.[4] (3) The third series, the *Exposition of the Law*, is the most exoteric one, and it covers parts of all the five books of Moses focusing, in particular, on the creation, the patriarchs and the injunctions of the Mosaic Law. Typical of the

* I thank David T. Runia for his valuable comments on a draft version of this essay. All the remaining infelicities are exclusively my responsibility.

1 For Philo's education and his use of Greek literature, see, e. g. Koskenniemi (2014) and the references there.

2 For a good introduction to Philo's works and their classification, see Royse (2009). His corpus is of the same order as Plato's. Sometimes the different books of certain Philonic treatises are counted as separate works, which raises the total to c. 50.

3 See Terian (1991). The allegory in the *Quaestiones* is often quite unelaborated when compared with the later series.

4 See, e. g., Burnett (1984), 449–50.

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first two subject areas is the alternation of rewritten biblical stories and their allegorizations.

The remaining handful of works consist of philosophical, historical and apologetic writings, many of considerable interest (e. g., Philo's retelling of the life of Moses in two books). Almost 25% of the corpus has survived, apart from some Greek and Latin fragments, only in a sixth-century Armenian translation, and perhaps one-third has been lost altogether.

Philo's treatises differ from Plato's in many ways. His works contain little narrative material, and we find nothing comparable to the Socratic irony in Philo.[5] His two dialogues, the *De animalibus* and the *De providentia* II, are quite unlike Plato's.[6] They focus on a thesis rather than a topic and consist of fairly long speeches of argument and counter-argument. The method of Socratic questioning is absent.

1) *Philo's Relation to Plato in Historical Perspective*

That Plato was for Philo a major reservoir of both philosophy and language has been recognized since antiquity. The first surviving reference to him, by Josephus, says he was "not inexperienced in philosophy" (*Antiquitates Judaicae* 18.259). The church historian Eusebius tells us that in addition to mastering all of Jewish theology Philo was "related to have surpassed all his contemporaries, especially in his zeal for the study of Plato and Pythagoras" (*HE* 2.4.3).[7] Jerome for his part is the first one to record the proverb, "Either Plato philonizes or Philo platonizes" (*De viris illustribus* 11.7).[8]

How the relationship of the two thinkers was seen in Byzantium and the medieval period in the West has not been much studied until recently.[9] The *bon mot* continued to be circulated.[10] In some Philonic manuscripts there are

5 E. g., the mocking of Egyptian religion in *Decal.* 79–80 would be an apposite passage for sarcasm, but we find Philo simply calling for horrification and pity as the appropriate reactions to animal worship.

6 For these, see Terian (2008), who sees Philo relying on parts of the *Phaedrus* in *Anim.* (see pp. 276–81).

7 Philo has little reception history within Judaism between Josephus and Azariah de' Rossi (see below). After the former, the reception and transmission of Philo takes place among the Platonist church fathers beginning with Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

8 On this saying, see Runia (1993a), 313–5.

9 See now Runia (2016).

10 It is cited with implicit approval by the patriarch Photius in the 9th century (*Bibliotheca*, cod. 105). Also the Byzantine scholar and statesman Theodore Metochites (d. 1332) is familiar with it, but he rejects it saying that Philo did not match Plato (*Semeioseis gnomikai* 16.2).

marginalia critical of clearly Platonic ideas, even omissions of passages that contain them.[11] Yet Philo was still an "honorary Church father."[12] His allegorical method did receive criticism, e. g., from Martin Luther, but this was not connected with his Platonism.[13]

During the 16th century the accessibility of Philo's works increased as they began to be printed. The connection between the Philonic *allegory* and Platonism could be seen more clearly, which caused criticism.[14] Among the many assessments of Philo's Platonism we may mention the one by the important and skillful editor of Philo, Thomas Mangey.[15] He crystallizes his view in the foreword to his 1742 edition of Philo's *oeuvre* in the form of a selection of Platonic doctrines in Philo as follows: the ideal of assimilation to God, the notion of the creation of the world in accordance with the invisible ideas, the preexistence of souls and reincarnation, the tripartition of the human soul and the four cardinal virtues as well as the notion that the stars and the world itself are living beings. His judgment is that Philo "does not show himself to be so much an interpreter of Moses but a pupil of gentile philosophy, principally a devotee of Plato's."[16]

The 19th and 20th centuries saw Philo's Platonism contextualized, as he began to be seen as part of a larger whole now called "Middle Platonism." John Dillon has shown that Philo provides us with good evidence for this phase of

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The first Jew to write, in the 1570s, a comprehensive assessment of Philo, Azariah de' Rossi, accepts the saying (2001), 111. Like Photius (but for different reasons) he has doubts about Philo's orthodoxy, but neither of them links this with Philo's Platonism (*idem*, 158).

11 E. g., the MS. Monacensis Graecus 459 contains many such scholia by a 15th-century hand (see Cohn et al. (1896), 1.VI–VII for quotations). Philo's heavily Platonizing *locus classicus* on reincarnation in *Somn.* 1.137–139 is carefully omitted in this 13th-century MS. On this passage, see below, n.50.

12 Runia (1993a), 31.

13 Luther (1895), 560. The details of the reception of Philo, and its possible dependence on that of Plato, by the different parties of the Reformation are to a large extent an unexplored territory. The same applies to Eastern Christendom, at least as far as studies published in the West are concerned.

14 Important works critical of Philo were Petavius (1745) (published originally in 1643) and Fabricius (1693). The former was a Jesuit, the latter, a Lutheran.

15 For a perceptive overview of other evaluations, see J. L. Mosheim's essay-length footnote in Cudworth (1845) (appeared originally in 1678), 320–33. Mosheim's view is that "the primary and fundamental doctrines of Plato are expressly put forth" by Philo (p. 321). See also Billings (1919), 1–12.

16 Mangey (1742), VII–VIII (my translation).

Platonism with its Pythagorean, Stoic and Aristotelian influences.[17] Yet there is no consensus of whether Philo, given his exegetical orientation, should be called a Middle Platonist, and, if so, in what sense. For example, although Dillon characterizes Moses, as interpreted by Philo, as "a great Middle Platonist," he does not consider Philo a philosopher in his own right.[18]

The key question regarding Philo's dual orientation is if he pursues "exegetical philosophy" or "philosophically orientated exegesis," i. e., ultimately, whether it is Plato or Moses who carries the day in Philo's thought.[19] Both views have had their defenders. David Winston has argued that Philo could just as well have written philosophical tractates on biblical themes, but that he chose the form of scriptural commentary in order to convince his audience that the philosophical ideas that abound in his allegories are embedded in the Pentateuch.[20] In Winston's view the "midrashic/allegorical character" of Philonic exegesis also allows a considerable amount of *eis*-egesis, reading things *into* scripture, which is why it is misleading to call Philo primarily an exegete.[21] The counterpoint, represented, e. g., by David T. Runia, is that Philo simply "discerns fundamental Greek philosophical assumptions within scripture itself" and that despite Philo's debt to Greek thought "he [often] speaks of God with spirituality quite different in flavor to that found in the works of Greek philosophers."[22] We will return to evaluating these positions in the last part of this essay.

2) *Philo's References to Plato and Socrates*

When we try to establish what Philo thought of Plato, we have two sets of sources: the direct characterizations and the way in which Plato's thought is actually used (for which see below). There are a total of 23 instances of the name Plato in the Philonic corpus.[23] What is common to these (with one

17 Dillon (1977/1996), 439. For Philo see Dillon (1977/1996), 139–83 and 438–41.

18 Dillon (1977/1996), 439, 143.

19 The distinction in the form quoted is from Runia (1986), 544.

20 Winston (1981), 2–3. He compares this to Plato's using the "teasing dialectic" of the dialogue form.

21 Winston (2005), 15.

22 Runia (1993b), 128; 1986, 541. The latter point is also brought up in Dillon (1977/1996), 143.

23 *Opif.* 119, 133; *Prob.* 13; *Contempl.* 57, 59; *Aet.* 13, 14, 16, 17, 27, 38, 52, 141, *Prov.* 1.20–22, 2.42, 52, 56; *QG* 1.6, 3.3; *QE* 2.118. (For *Prov.*, the numbering is for Aucher's edition of the Armenian.) For concise overviews of Philo's references to, and quotations from Plato, see Runia (1986), 366–70 and Sterling (2014), 138–9. The *De aeternitate mundi* and the *De providentia* belong to the philosophical treatises, to which the *Quod omnis probus liber sit* should be added, which differ from the majority of the Philonic writings in the degree of openness of references to Greek sources.

exception) is a positive attitude. Plato is also many times referred to anonymously, ranging from "one of the ancients" (*Her.* 181) to just "someone" (*Spec.* 2.249). The name of Socrates – the only historical person of significance for Philo in Plato's works – is mentioned less often than Plato's.[24] While Philo may speak of Socrates without mentioning Plato, the former does not have a clearly distinguishable voice of his own. The reference to "a man highly esteemed, one of those admired for their wisdom" in the context of a rare, explicit quotation from *Tht.* 176ab in *Fug.* 63 could mean either, but the more likely referent is Socrates.[25]

One case of naming Plato is particularly interesting. Does Philo really call him "the most holy" (ἱερώτατον) in *Prob.* 13 – an epithet usually reserved to Moses? This reading of a single manuscript was accepted by Mangey and Cohn; the other MSS. have λιγυρώτατον.[26] The passage contains citations from *Phdr.* 247a and 243d. Colson's observations about the scene of the dialogue as λίγυρος (230c) and the Muses as λίγειαι (237a) are relevant, but do not explain why *Plato* would be called "most musical" or "clear-voiced", as he renders. I think the answer lies in the relation of the cicadas (which Philo actually mentions in § 8) and the Muses to *the art of speaking well*; see esp. 258d–262d. Philo is using a *Phaedrus*-inspired adjective to praise Plato's style.[27]

There is one place in Philo's works where Plato himself is subjected to what may be called criticism. In his laudatory description of the proto-monastic

24 There are eight instances in total: *Somn.* 1.58; *Contempl.* 57; *Prov.* 2.8, 24 (2.21 in PLCL), 42; *QG* 2.3, 2.6, 3.3. A few of the references are to Xenophon: Paramelle (1984) gives *Memorabilia* 1.4.12 and 1.4.6–7 for the references in *QG* 2.3 and 2.6, respectively. When referring to *Phdr.* 246e in *QG* 3.3 Philo speaks of "the Socratic Plato" – an expression used before him by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*De Demosthenis dictione* 3.8 and *De compositione verborum* 16.22).

25 Philo mentions Socrates' being admired for his wisdom in *Plant.* 80 and *Prov.* 2.8. Cf. also Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 4.2.3 and *Tht.* 161c where Socrates uses the same expression (although not of himself). For the deviations from the received Platonic text in this and twenty-one other Platonic citations in the Philonic corpus, see Runia (1997).

26 Runia (1997), 276 calls for "very serious consideration" for this latter reading as *lectio difficilior,* whereas Sterling (2016), 37 argues in favor of the former as the more difficult reading.

27 That a scribe might substitute "most holy" is understandable, if he did not know the *Phaedrus* and in light of the fact that the reference to Plato in § 13 is substantially connected to the reference to "the saintly company (ἱερώτατον θίασον) of the Pythagoreans" in § 2. Interestingly, *Prob.* 13 also seems to contain a retort to Aristophanes who in the *Clouds* portrays the door of Socrates' "school of thought" (φροντιστήριον) as locked (ll. 132–183); cf. Philo "wisdom … never closes her school of thought (φροντιστήριον)." Philo is the first author after Aristophanes to use this word and does so only here.

community of the so-called *therapeutai* and *therapeutrides* Philo makes it a point to describe their "convivial meals as contrasted with those of other people" (*Contempl.* 40), also the *Symposia* by Xenophon and Plato (§§ 57–64). Philo describes both banquets as "matters for derision" if compared with those of the Therapeutae (§ 58). Xenophon's are briefly described as occasions for merry-making, whereas Plato's get more attention with pederasty at its center. While the practice is denounced in strong terms (§§ 59–62), Philo treats both authors in a noteworthily delicate manner, calling them "men whose character and discourses showed them to be philosophers" (§ 57).[28] The criticism is carefully targeted at their judgment of the symposia as being "models of the happily conducted banquet" (*ibid.*) but even this criticism is left implicit. Plato's references to pederasty do not, on the whole, seem important for Philo, let alone a hindrance for using the philosopher's ideas.[29]

It has been suggested that Philo so rarely mentions Plato's name in his exegetical treatises because he wanted to avoid the obvious.[30] This may be part of the explanation. Regardless, the phenomenon should be seen in light of a more general avoidance of name-dropping.[31] As for Plato in particular, giving a reference each time when a Platonic idea or expression was utilized would have been highly impractical, given Philo's constant use of the philosopher as a source of both major notions (e. g., the creation of the universe according to an intelligible model) and a plethora of terms and images. It is also worth noting that Philo's text can be read without knowledge of his sources, but that if these are recognized, a new level of interpretation appears as the *contexts* of the borrowings dawn on the audience.[32]

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28 There are inaccuracies in Philo's criticism, in particular with regard to the distinction between popular and heavenly love introduced in Pausanias's speech (181c–185e). See Colson's notes *ad loc.*

29 It remains unclear whether Philo knew the condemnation of homoerotic behavior in the *Laws* (e. g., 636c, 838e). He does use partly similar language (see *Abr.* 135; *Spec.* 2.50, 3.37, 39; *Contempl.* 59, 62) but does not appeal to Plato.

30 Runia (1997), 270–71. However, Philo several times anonymously alludes to Socrates in a way that presupposes no knowledge of him (*Deus* 146, *Plant.* 65) or the *Ap.* (a reference to 21d at *Plant.* 80).

31 E. g., Homer is mentioned by name only once in the *Allegorical Commentary* (*Conf.* 4), whereas the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* are referred to almost 30 times.

32 Philo's use of Plato's reincarnational texts is an excellent example. Philo is reluctant to explain the tenet openly, and his veiled references to it can (and continue to) be read ignoring the original contexts of their Platonic elements. See Yli-Karjanmaa (2015), 111–27.

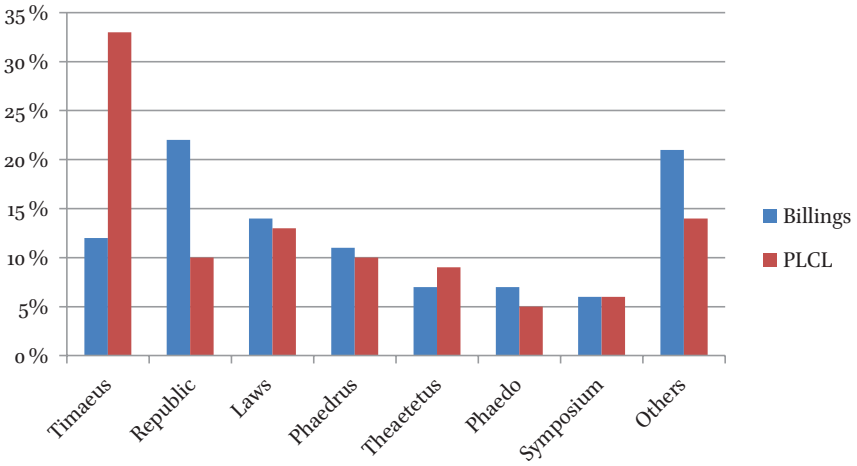

FIGURE 1 *The distribution of the references to Plato's dialogues in Philo's works in the Loeb Classical Library and in Billings 1919.*

3) *The Corpus Used*

There are large differences in how frequently Philo uses Plato's various dialogues. Comparing the 700 references to Plato's works in Billings' 1919 work on Philo's Platonism with the c. 200 in the notes of the first ten volumes of the English translation of Philo's *oeuvre* in the Loeb Classical Library (PLCL), and looking at the seven dialogues whose average share exceeds 5% we get the picture above.

With the exception of the *Timaeus* and the *Republic* there is fair convergence between Billings and the Loeb edition, although the differences in approach mean that the comparison is suggestive only. In total, Billings refers to 25 dialogues, the PLCL to 15. In Runia's grand study on Philo's use of the *Timaeus*, the top six non-Timaean dialogues are the same as above with the exception that the *Statesman* replaces the *Symposium*.[33] The frequency of usage naturally varies according to subject matter. In Méasson's monograph on Platonic images and myths in Philo special attention is given to the *Phaedrus*, which, together with the *Timaeus*, constitutes almost 60% of her references, the top seven being the same as in Runia.[34] In my own study on Philo's position on reincarnation the four dialogues clearly most often referred to make up 92% and consist of the *Phaedo* (34%), followed by the *Timaeus, Phaedrus* and *Republic*.[35]

33 Runia (1986).
34 Méasson (1986).
35 Yli-Karjanmaa (2015).

II Philo's Use of Plato

The primary forum where the interplay between Philo's Judaism and Platonism can be observed is his allegorical exegesis. Plato's division of reality into a lower, mundane and sense-perceptible sphere and a higher, heavenly and noetic one is of fundamental importance for Philo. In addition, the Alexandrian cuts and pastes freely from different dialogues both specific expressions and more general imagery that pleases him. This method makes it virtually certain he had committed large portions of Plato's works to memory, for we cannot assume that, when a single sentence of Philo's contains language from several dialogues, this is the result of consulting several scrolls.[36]

Admittedly Philo also deviates from Plato in points of doctrine. Lists of such deviations have been presented by, e. g., Goodenough and Runia.[37] The lists do not have much in common but both, on questionable grounds, include a major tenet, reincarnation.[38] That Philo could not accept the idea of human souls being born in *animal* bodies is clear, because his anthropology differs from Plato's in the direction of Aristotle and the Stoics: animals do not possess νοῦς, which for Philo is the primary term for the rational part of the soul.[39]

It is time to see in practice how Philo blends Plato with the Bible in his allegories by looking at what Philo says of Gen. 6:2 in *Gig.* 6–18. The biblical verse runs, in Philo's Bible, "Now when the angels (ἄγγελοι; the LXX has ὑιοί, "sons") of God saw the daughters of humans, that they were fair, they took wives for themselves of all that they chose."[40]

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36 So also Dillon (1977/1996), 140.

37 Goodenough (1946), 106–7; Runia (1986), 512–13.

38 Goodenough's justification is merely Philo's "Jewish foundation." Runia sees Philo replacing reincarnation with allegorical explanation. For a critique of his position, see Yli-Karjanmaa (2015), esp. 20–25 and 120–22.

39 *Opif.* 73; *Deus* 45, 47; *Anim.* 85. For Plato νοῦς is not an essential part of the human being and can occur also in animals (*Tim.* 51e, 92c), whereas Aristotle considers it possible that it can be separate from the soul and immortal (*De anima* 413b25–28, 429a22–26, 430a22–23). According to Koester (1995), 270, the view that the animals are devoid of νοῦς is a Stoic doctrine.

40 (trans.) New English Translation of the Septuagint.

Runia has analyzed the structure of Philo's allegorical treatises and made important observations.[41] He gives the structure of *Gig.* 6–18 as follows:[42]

(a) § 6 citation of the main biblical lemma, Gen. 6:2
(b) § 6 *initial observation* (angels, demons, Moses)
(c) § 7–16 *background information*
(d) § 17 *proof* of doctrine: secondary biblical lemma Ps. 77:49 [mode of transition verbal ἀγγέλους = > ἀγγέλων πονηρῶν]
(e) § 17–18 *detailed allegorical explanation.*

The "initial observation" (b) runs, "Those whom the philosophers designate 'daemons,' Moses is accustomed to call angels. These are souls that fly in the air."[43] This statement, which orientates the audience away from the prediluvian context, is a part of a set of notions which Philo repeats, with some variation, in the context of no less than five different biblical texts.[44] The underlying scheme is that there are souls found in the element air, just like each of the other elements has its creatures, and some of these souls undergo incarnation – the foolish ones repeatedly in *Somn.* – while others, i. e., the angels, do not. This scheme is exposed to view to different degrees in different treatises. The idea that there are souls or daemons (or heroes in *Plant.*) in the *air* Philo has probably been appropriated from Pythagorean or Platonist sources.[45]

41 Runia (1987). See also Runia (1984), esp. pp. 238–44. A brief summary: In his allegorical treatises Philo, as a rule, goes through a series of *main biblical lemmas* (MBL). He often makes some initial observation to "break open" the verse in question and may give some background information before embarking on his actual allegory. He very often uses other biblical texts, *secondary biblical lemmas* (SBL), to explain the main one. These are linked with the MBL by a common word, or a theme, or both, and there is thus a verbal or thematic *mode of transition* (MOT). Usually Philo returns to the MBL before moving to the next one. For a recent application of these observations, see Geljon & Runia (2013), esp. pp. 10–20.

42 Runia (1987), 133.

43 (trans.) Winston (1981) as all quotations from *Gig.* (with occasional modifications). For a commentary, see Winston & Dillon (1983).

44 These are, in addition to *Gig.* 6–18, *Plant.* 12–14 (Gen. 9:20), *Somn.* 1.134–41 (Gen. 28:12) and the little more distant parallels in *Conf.* 174–7 (Gen. 11:7) and (part of) *QG* 4.188 (Gen. 26:8).

45 See Alexander Polyhistor's compendium of Pythagorean teachings at D.L. 8.25–35 and Augustine's reference to the views of the Middle Platonist Varro in *Ciu. Dei* 7.6. The notion can also function as an "attempt to systematize" various Platonic and Platonist views concerning incorporeal souls, as Runia (1986), 254 sees it. See further, *idem*, 229 and

Runia's point (c) concerning §§ 7–16 seems to call for further analysis. I think the section should be seen in the light of Philo's *solution* to the awkward biblical statement concerning angels:[46] Philo explains them as pleasure-oriented human souls (§§ 17–18; cf. §§ 19–20). But are §§ 7–16 "background information" only, yet "necessary for the allegory"?[47] The section unfolds the scheme of the airy souls which takes over once Philo encounters the word "angels." The inclusion of air as the location of the souls is instrumental: it leads to the exposition of each of the four elements being the home of the creatures appropriate to it (derived from *Tim.* 39e–40a). Philo reinforces this by also alluding to the requirement in 41b that heaven be not imperfect: "For the universe must be animated through and through" (*Gig.* 7, elaborated in §§ 8–11).[48]

In *Gig.* 13 Philo proceeds to the human souls' incarnation and utilizes the Timaean image of the body as a river (*Tim.* 43ac). From the descent it is logical to continue to the ascent, but Philo has no use for Plato's mythical "native stars" (42b), so he changes dialogues and speaks of the souls' returning to their starting point, their correct philosophizing and their practice of dying to the bodily life (§§ 13–14) utilizing both the *Phaedrus* (248e–249a) and the *Phaedo* (67de, 80e).[49] In § 15 Philo returns to the wicked who have "never had a vision of the truly beautiful," again echoing the *Phaedrus* (e. g., 247cd, 248bc, 249de). The section closes (§ 16) with a statement that souls exist in good as well as bad variety: the bad "angels" are not worthy of the appellation, whereas the real ones act as mediators between God and humans – an allusion to *Symp*. 202e.[50]

Winston and Dillon (1983), 197–200. Méasson (1986), 405 speaks of a hypothetical, possibly fragmentary "commentaire du *Timée* par le *Phèdre*." However, the *variation* in the mixtures of Platonic elements in the parallels (see n.50) strongly points to the direction of Philo's own creativity. Similarly, Runia (1988), 292.

46 Nikiprowetzky (1983), 11 puts it like this: "Mais alors comment peut-on entendre que des *anges de Dieu* aient *épousé* les *passions* des hommes?" Passions is the interpretation of the "daughters" of Gen. 6:1 (*Gig.* 5), and it would be better not to juxtapose this *explanatio* with the following *explanandum* ("angels").

47 Runia (1987), 122, in a general description of Philo's exegetical procedure of providing background information.

48 Winston & Dillon (1983), 240–41 refer, as parallels to this section, to passages in *Tim., Laws* and also *Axiochus*. In § 12 Philo makes a statement on (real) angels, for which they point to *Symp., Plt.* and *Rep.*

49 This is an example of how Philo turns a blind eye to a reference to pederasty. Plato writes in *Phdr.* 248e–249a: "For each soul returns to the place whence it came in ten thousand years [and not before] . . ., except the soul of him who has been a guileless philosopher or a philosophical pederast" – for whom reincarnation only lasts three thousand years.

50 The *Symp*. passage is also drawn on in *Plant.* 14 and *Somn.* 1.141. The latter treatise features a Platonic cento which is even denser than the one in *Gig.*, for in the space of

At § 17 Philo introduces as "testimony" the secondary biblical lemma, Ps. 78:49 (77:49 LXX) which mentions "wicked angels."[51] What Philo now supports with this text is the initial observation, reiterated in § 16, of "angels" meaning souls.[52] Only after this does Philo proceed to the actual allegorical interpretation based on the result he has reached, "wicked angels = bad souls."

The contents of the cento are in no way based on the main biblical lemma, only triggered by it.[53] §§ 7–16 are thus more than just background information, but whether they are necessary for the allegory is debatable. For neither of the main elements in the interpretation "angels married daughters of humans = wicked people seek pleasures" is dependent on it: That "daughters" mean vice and passions was already the interpretation of Gen. 6:1 (*Gig.* 5), and this, coupled with the initial observation that the word "angels" denotes souls, means we are dealing with wicked souls.

We next take another kind of example. In the *De virtutibus* (part of the *Exposition of the Law*) Philo discusses the nobility of birth (εὐγενεία) in §§ 187–227. He says it is not hereditary but depends on acquisition (§ 198) and illustrates this through biblical examples. Adam's nobility was peerless, but it did not prevent the transgression which Philo in §§ 203–205 describes replacing the scriptural details with something else:

> *Virt.* 205: [H]e eagerly chose the false, shameful and evil things (τὰ κακά) disregarding those that are good and excellent and true, on which

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c. 70 words in 1.137–9 Philo, in his most explicit description of reincarnation, manages to make identifiable references to *Phd.* 66c, 68b; *Phdr.* 246c; *Symp.* 211e and *Tim.* 41d, 44b as well as including other notions for which clear counterparts exist in these dialogues and *Crat., Grg.* and *Rep.* See Yli-Karjanmaa (2015), 130–43.

51 Philo can be very selective in his use of a biblical lemma. Here its context and most of the contents are ignored.

52 The return to the initial observation is reminiscent of Philo's habit of eventually returning to the main biblical lemma. Another interesting observation is that this secondary lemma is *not* a case where "Moses is being explained via Moses" Runia (1987), 112. We may note too that the transition – from the *initial observation* to the secondary lemma – is not only verbal but also thematic.

53 This is not an isolated case. In all of the parallels to *Gig.* 6–18 (see n.44) Philo's biblical basis is very narrow. In *Plant.*, the whole section §§ 1–139 is an elaboration of a single word in the MBL (Gen. 9:20): "planted"; in *Somn.*, the MBL (Gen. 28:12) speaks of ascending and descending angels; in *Conf.*, it is the existence of angels that explains the plural verb form in Gen. 1:26 which is introduced as an SBL to help explain the corresponding plural in the MBL (Gen. 11:7); finally in *QG* 4.188 it is the "game" Isaac played with Rebecca in Gen. 26:8 that leads Philo's mind to "festive enjoyments of the perfect," enjoyed also during and after their incarnation. I find it strained to think the Platonic scheme is inherent in these verses; Philo is rather using every opportunity to present it to his audience.

> account he fittingly exchanged (ἀνθυπηλλάξατο) an immortal life (βίον) for a mortal one and, forfeiting (σφαλείς) blessedness and happiness (εὐδαιμονίας), promptly changed (μετέβαλεν) to an arduous (ἐπίπονον) and unfortunate (κακοδαίμονα) existence.[54]
>
> Cf. *Tim.* 42bc: And he that has lived his appointed time well shall return again to his abode in his native star, and shall gain a life (βίον) that is blessed (εὐδαίμονα) and congenial, but whoso has failed (σφαλείς) therein shall be changed (μεταβαλοῖ) into woman's nature at the second birth; and if, in that shape, he still refraineth not from wickedness (κακίας) he shall be changed (μεταβαλοῖ) every time, according to the nature of his wickedness (κακύνοιτο), into some bestial form after the similitude of his own nature; nor in his changings shall he cease (ἀλλάττων) from woes (πόνων) until ...

We can note four main differences from the example in *Gig.*: there is now thematic similarity between Philo's biblical base text and Plato, there is no explicit interpretation but rather retelling, only one dialogue is utilized, and, rather than Platonic expressions recognizable as such, this is a case of an accumulation of individual words.[55] In each case, the dire consequences of an initial, ethically unsuccessful incarnation are depicted.[56] Given Philo's endorsement of reincarnation, it seems he wants to subtly remind his audience of it.

The last example concerns the utilization of a dialogue as a whole. As we mentioned above, when it comes to the soul and its fate, the *Phaedo* is very important for Philo. But given that most of Philo's allegories are in one way or

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54 (trans.) Wilson (2010), 86 with some emendations.

55 To my knowledge, the connection between these passages has not been noted in previous scholarship. Although the clearest, it is not the only link between what Philo says about the first man in *Virt.* and what Plato says in *Tim.* In § 204 Philo states,

> ... his father (πατήρ) was no mortal but the eternal God (ὁ ἀίδιος θεός), whose image he was in a sense, in virtue of the ruling mind within the soul (τὸν ἡγεμόνα νοῦν ἐν ψυχῇ). Yet though he should have followed (ἐπακολουθήσαντα) as far as he could in the steps of his Parent's (τοῦ γεννήσαντος) virtues ...

Compare *Tim.* 37c: "the Father that engendered [the Soul of the world] (ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ) perceived it in motion and alive, a thing of joy to the eternal gods (τῶν ἀιδίων θεῶν)," and 41c: "Now so much of [the mortal creatures] as it is proper to designate 'immortal,' the part we call divine which rules (ἡγεμονοῦν) supremely in those who are fain to follow (ἕπεσθαι) justice always and yourselves . . ."

56 Philo again repeats a scheme, now that of exchanging happy immortality for unhappy mortality, in discussing different biblical verses (but now the scheme itself is not Platonic). The most important parallels are *Opif.* 151–2 (see Runia (2001), 359), *Leg.* 3.52 (see Yli-Karjanmaa (2016)), *Plant.* 37 and *QG* 1.45.

the other related to the soul, we could expect a higher overall ranking for the dialogue.[57] Admittedly, Plato discusses the soul in other dialogues as well, but, in my view, the significance of the *Phaedo* for Philo has not yet been fully uncovered. Its importance does not lie in the narrative of Socrates' last moments or in proving the soul's immortality – such a basic belief needed for Philo no proof. But there are a number of Phaedonic ideas in Philo's treatises which are fundamental for the Alexandrian's basic ethos.[58]

In *Gig.* we already encountered the concept of philosophizing rightly which Philo uses many times.[59] In the *Phaedo* it is thrice combined with practising death, which appears also independently in the dialogue.[60] Philo too uses the combination to describe the upward journey of the God-seeking soul in which both correct ideas and correct actions play an important role.[61] The fundamental idea of Philo's ethics is for the soul to orientate away from the sense-perceptible towards to the noetic, or, as Socrates puts it in the *Phaedo*, from "visible" to "invisible."[62]

We can also discern in Philo Phaedonic themes that can be broadly grouped under anthropology.[63] The deceitfulness of the senses is one.[64] However, quite often he gives it a slightly un-Platonic slant: the senses are actually prone to

57 The words ψυχή and νοῦς alone make up 0.6% of Philo's Greek *oeuvre*.

58 Some of these are discussed in more detail in Yli-Karjanmaa (2015), esp. 122–4 and 150–52.

59 *Phd.* 64a, 67de, 69d, 80e, 82c (also *Phdr.* 249a and *Ep. 7* 326a): see *Gig.* 14, *Deus* 22, *Agr.* 104, *Plant.* 24, *Decal.* 58 and *Spec.* 1.32.

60 *Phd.* 64a, 67e, 80e, and 65ac, 66a, 67ad, 81a, respectively.

61 *Gig.* 14, *Plant.* 24–25. In both, clear echoes of the *Phaedrus* are also present. Philo refers to the practice of death in different ways: he may alter the vocabulary but keep the idea (*Leg.* 1.103, *Det.* 49, *Conf.* 82) or keep Plato's wording but give it a different meaning (*Det.* 34, *QG* 4.173). These correspond to the different conceptions of *life* to which one *dies to*: the body-oriented life (the first three); the physical life more generally (*Det.*) or that of virtue (*QG*).

62 E. g., 79a–b.

63 In addition, terminological influence of the *Phd.* can be seen in Philo's frequently defining death as the separation of soul from body using the verbs χωρίζω and διαζεύγνυμι and their cognates (67cd, 88b; also *Rep.* 609d, *Ep. 7* 335a; cf. *Leg.* 1.105, 2.77; *Plant.* 25, *Fug.* 55, *Abr.* 258, *Virt.* 76). Philo is the first to use Plato's adjective "body-loving" (φιλοσώματος, 68b; twelve occurrences in Philo). Furthermore, Socrates repeatedly refers to reincarnation in the *Phd.* using either the combination of πάλιν with γίγνομαι/γένεσις or the verb ἀναβιώσκομαι (70cd, 72a, 113a, and 71e, 72ad, respectively). I have concluded that in two out of Philo's four fairly explicit approvals of the doctrine these have served as models, and in one of them Socrates' juxtaposition of sleep and death is also significant. The passages are *Cher.* 114 (παλιγγενεσία) and fr. 7.3 Harris (ἀναβίωσις with the combination of sleep and death, for which see esp. *Phd.* 71c). See Yli-Karjanmaa (2015), 150–67 and 202–5.

64 *Phd.* 83a; cf. *Conf.* 126, *Spec.* 4.188.

be deceived, and once that happens, they drag the mind with them.[65] Cf. Gen. 3:13 where Eve (allegorized as sense-perception) says that the serpent (pleasure), "deceived me".[66] In the *Phaedo* this theme is linked with soul's identification with the body: "each pleasure or pain nails [the soul] as with a nail to the body," and such a soul "can never depart in purity to the other world, but must always go away contaminated with the body," eventually reincarnate.[67] In a few Philonic passages an intriguingly similar thought is expressed. E. g., those who manage to "quit the earthly region … [are] carrying in their train no bodily deficiencies," while for the wicked soul (apparently in the afterlife) it applies that "the evils with which it has grown up [are] in a certain sense its members and grow together with it."[68]

To summarize Philo's use of Plato's texts: Three major themes come together in the *Timaeus*: the two levels of reality, the creation of the lower in accordance with the higher and the structure and the journey of the soul. These Philo adopts, and adapts to his exegetical purposes, drawing heavily also on the account of the fall and rise of the soul in the *Phaedrus* as well as the overarching ethos of orientation away from the bodily sphere in order to permanently reach the intelligible one in the *Phaedo*.

III Conclusion

It has been said that for Philo the Middle Platonism of Alexandria and his ancestral faith "were two ways of expressing a single vision of truth."[69] But as the examples above have aimed to show, the (sacred and inviolate) biblical text is Philo's *explanandum*, and what the *explanatio* to a large degree consists of are Platonic expressions and ideas as well as their Platonist developments. The process of allegorical interpretation gives Philo much freedom; we have seen how narrow a biblical basis he sometimes needs and how he offers the same scheme as the interpretation of entirely different verses. The singleness of the vision is only the

65 *Gig.* 18, *Ebr.* 46.

66 *Opif.* 165–166, *Leg.* 3.59–68, *QG* 1.46–47.

67 *Phd.* 83d, 81ac.

68 *Det.* 27, *QG* 2.61. There is some evidence to suggest that in Philo the elimination of the "bodily" parts of the soul may be a prerequisite of salvation; see Yli-Karjanmaa (2015), 85–90. This idea also bears some resemblance to the notion of "double death" (mentioned by Plutarch in connection with Xenocrates' ideas in *De facie* 943a ff.) whereby the soul is first separated from the body and then the mind from the soul.

69 Sterling (1993), 111.

end result of the process, and in analyzing its contents it is reasonable to lay more weight on what the biblical text *ends up meaning* than on Philo's professed allegiance to its letter.[70] And we are not just dealing with individual interpretations but a whole worldview with its two levels, the earthly and the heavenly.

Describing Philo's Moses as "a great Middle Platonist" thus seems fairly accurate.[71] But would Philo himself say he was only "borrowing back" what the Greek philosophers had taken from Moses?[72] Given the statements to this effect by Philo's predecessor Aristobulus more than a century and a half before him and the echoes found in Philo himself, it may have been a Jewish convention to profess such a view.[73] Yet in Philo's exegetical praxis its significance in relation to Plato is negligible.

Philo was a loyal Jew committed to Jewish customs, and he denounced those who forsook the literal interpretation of the Mosaic law in favor of the allegorical – even if his criticism is rather mild and perhaps primarily aims at securing the social acceptability of practicing allegory.[74] There is no reason to posit a contradiction between the specifically Jewish characteristics in Philo's endeavor, such as the spirit of a personal relationship with God or the importance of God's grace for salvation, and the incorporation of his favorite philosophical ideas into the allegories. He was both a Jew and a Platonist, the former by birth, the latter, by choice.

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70 An example of the latter is, "you will not find a single pointless expression" by Moses (*Leg.* 3.147). Cf. Runia (1986), 328, regarding *Det.* 79–90 and *Plant.* 16–22, passages which

> show Philo at the peak of his powers. The role which Plato's doctrine of man, as presented in the *Timaeus*, plays in Philo's thought is revealed with more than usual clarity. In order to show man's exceptional place in the structure of the cosmos, Philo *centres his account* around the two primary anthropological passages of the Mosaic creation story. But in his endeavour to *explain what these texts actually tell us* about man's nature he resorts to the two Platonic accounts of man which he knew best, the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus* myth.

Granted, Runia speaks of "*more than usual* clarity," but this applies to the *degree* to which the role of Plato's doctrine is *revealed*.

71 See above, n.18.

72 So Dillon (1993), 152; cf. (1977/1996), 143, 148–9.

73 E. g., "It seems to me that Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato with great care follow [Moses] in all respects" (Aristobulus, fr. 4 in Charlesworth (2009), 2.839 = fr. 2 in the TLG, preserved by Eusebius in *Praep. ev.* 13.12.4.). For similar statements in Philo, see, e. g., *Leg.* 1.108 (Heraclitus), *Prob.* 59 (Zeno).

74 *Migr.* 86–94.

CHAPTER 7

Plutarch of Chaeronea and the Anonymous Commentator on the *Theaetetus*

Mauro Bonazzi

I.

Plutarch lived during exciting and risky times for a Platonist. Indeed, this was the period of the triumphal return of Plato onto the philosophical scene.[1] Admittedly, Plato's star and fame never ceased to shine; but during the Hellenistic centuries the philosophical priorities were other than Plato's, and attention was directed elsewhere. In the first two centuries CE the philosophical debates focused on him once again. This explains why this period was also risky for a Platonist. Insofar as Plato was the focal point, the majority of schools appropriated him by presenting themselves as the legitimate heirs of his legacy. The result was a proliferation of different images of Plato, each containing something important but hardly compatible one with the other. The risk – a dangerous risk for those who, like Plutarch, styled themselves as Platonists – was the impossibility of a coherent account of his philosophy. The obsession typical of this period for discovering the "system" made the problem even more serious.[2] In the history of Platonism this is a period of identity crisis.

As often happens in psychoanalysis, the most popular solution was "removal". Most of the Platonists tried to solve the problem by rejecting as not genuinely Platonic those interpretations which were not compatible with their own idea of Platonism. This strategy was particularly successful with regard to the sceptical Plato, that is the interpretation endorsed by the Hellenistc Academy of Arcesilaus, Carneades and Philo of Larissa.[3] Such an aporetic interpretation was taken to be the official, institutional interpretation of Plato from 266 BCE to approximately 90 BCE and so exegetes had to construct responses to this

1 For a general introduction to Early Imperial Platonism, see Dillon (1977/1996), Donini (1982), Tarrant (2000), 72–89 and, more recently, Bonazzi (2015), 73–109.

2 An eloquent testimony: Cicero, *De fin.* III 74, on which see Donini (1994), 5027–30.

3 See Cicero, *Ac.* 46, *Lucullus* 74, *De orat.* III 67; Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1121f–1122a; Anon., *Proleg.* 10–12.

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longstanding anomaly within the tradition. From Antiochus to late Neoplatonists many of those with links to Platonism, argued that Plato and scepticism were two mutually exclusive options and expunged the sceptical Academy from the history of Platonism, decrying it as a deviation, not to say a betrayal.[4] Successful as it was, such a strategy, however, was not entirely satisfying for at least two reasons. A first problem is that in consequence of this removal Platonists were obliged to acknowledge the weakness of their tradition, as opposed to the coherent and stable traditions of competing schools such as the Stoa or the Garden. In the intellectual world of these philosophers, for whom the past and the tradition were the source of every good, this was problematic, as Numenius complained.[5] Furthermore, the problem was made more serious by the implicit assumption that this instability might have depended on Plato himself – to put it otherwise, it was argued that Plato was unclear in comparison with other philosophers like Aristotle or Chrysippus.[6] Given the insistence of other schools on the clarity of the doctrines of their founding fathers in a context that viewed philosophy as a coherent and exhaustive system, this lack of clarity might appear as the sign of philosophical weakness. It is not by chance that a major problem for Platonists was the defense and explication of Plato's apparent stylistic ambiguity or obscurity.[7]

The removal strategy, however, was not the only one. Two Platonists at least tried to develop a more inclusive reading of Plato, which could account also for scepticism. These two philosophers were the renowned Plutarch of Chaeronea, one of the leading writers of his time, and an anonymous exegete, of whom we only have the first part of a commentary on the *Theaetetus* which can be approximately dated to the same context and time of Plutarch.[8] By focusing on them, and on Plutarch especially, we will find an interesting and original reading of Plato.

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4 Cf. for instance Cicero, *Lucullus* 15 (referring Antiochus' views); Numenius fr. 24–28 des Places; Proclus, *PT* I 1, Anon., *Proleg.* 10.1–12.3.

5 Fr. 24, 18–36 des Places. On the importance of tradition, see Boys-Stones (2001).

6 Cf. for instance Stobeus, *Anth.* II 7, 4a, 55.5–6 Wachsmuth (traditionally attributed to Eudorus or Arius Didymus).

7 Cf. Ferrari (2010), Petrucci (2015).

8 The date and identity of this commentator has been object of many discussions in the past years, since Tarrant (1983) first proposed to identify him with Eudorus of Alexandria in the first century BCE. A similar date was also defended by Sedley (1995), but was later rejected by Opsomer (1998), 34–36, Brittain (2001), 249–54 and Bonazzi (2003), who proposed to date him at around the first-second century AD, that is more or less the same period as Plutarch.

II.

As in the case of every substantial thinker, Plutarch's position is not easy to circumscribe.[9] In the early Imperial centuries philosophers, and most notably Platonist philosophers, were professors in their own private schools. By consequence their activity consisted primarily in the exegesis of the authoritative texts of the tradition to which the professor belonged, Plato for Platonists, Aristotle for the Peripatetics, and so on. The assumption was that the key, and the answer to the problems were in the texts of the founding fathers. While not the only pedagogical method,[10] analysis and reflection on the texts of the school was one of the most fundamental aspects of teaching. As for the the anonymous commentator on the *Theaetetus*, we unfortunately do not know much about his background but we can guess that this may also be the case for him too.

Plutarch is different from the run-of-the-mill exegetically oriented professor. Indeed, he had pupils and ran something like a school in his native town Cheronea but it was not "very formal" and due to this Plutarch was notably prolific.[11] His written works significant for Platonic reception include the *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*, a very sophisticated interpretation of one section of Plato's *Timaeus*, and the ten *Platonicae quaestiones* which address particular problems of Plato's philosophy. In addition we also have some polemical texts, devoted to a critical, sometimes unfair, survey of the tenets of the other schools, particularly Stoicism and Epicureanism. Overall, Plutarch was not merely a teacher; he was a leading authority of his community, he had a public life, and was also priest at Delphi. He wrote many other texts that are atypical of those normally produced in the philosophical schools, such as the *Parallel Lives*. For our discussion it is important to stress that in those other texts too Plato was a prominent point of reference, to the extent that some of these works can be read as a kind of rewriting of Plato's dialogues. Such is the case of the *Erotikos*, whose subtexts are in all evidence in Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, and perhaps also of the fragmentary *De anima* which looks like a new version of the *Phaedo*.[12] Plutarch's use of Plato was extensive and his

9 Some general introductions to Plutarch's life and thought: Ziegler (1965); Russell (1973); Dillon (1977/1996), 184–230; Brouillette (2014).

10 As well known, there were also moments of open discussions on practical or more general themes. An interesting case is Taurus, explored by Lakmann (1995).

11 Russell (1973), 13.

12 As I try to argue in Bonazzi (2010).

allegiance to him was not merely scholastic.[13] This makes his case more difficult to reconstruct but also more interesting.

Which are the cardinal tenets of his interpretation? A clear-cut answer is not easy to gauge; perhaps he said something explicit in his work *On the Unity of the Academy from the time of Plato* (n° 63 of Lamprias' Catalogue), which is now unfortunately lost. In the surviving works he is rather reticent. However, we can reconstruct the general framework and some more distinctive details of his reading of Plato. The first and most important element of Plutarch's interpretation, which associates him with the other Platonists of his time, is the emphasis on the theological dimension of Plato's philosophy.[14] In the dialogues, as every reader knows, Plato stresses the opposition between the sensible world in which our bodies live and another dimension, which is regularly presented as the intelligible realm. This intelligible world is also presented as divine, even though this qualification does not appear to be the most relevant feature. In Early Imperial times philosophy and theology were much more strongly interlinked than in Plato's era: indeed philosophy was regarded as culminating in theology, the so-called *epopteia* of the *Symposium*. The result was a theological interpretation of the dialogues, with much prominence given to the *Timaeus* and those sections of the other dialogues which dealt precisely with these topics. In this context we have already mentioned *Symposium*, but not less important were the *Phaedrus*' palinody and parts of the *Phaedo*.

This theological emphasis is a common feature that associates Plutarch with the other Platonists of his day; and, like his colleagues, he had to face the problems which resulted from this interpretation. The solutions he developed help to show his original stance, and the peculiarity of his interpretation. To begin, two problems deserve some attention, the problem of the eternity of the universe and that of the ontological status of the ideas. The *Timaeus*, as I have remarked, was the most important dialogue; he presented Plato's most clear exposition of God, that is the Demiurge, and of his activity. But what was Plato's position regarding the most important activity of the Demiurge, that is the creation of the universe? Should we assume that Plato endorsed the view that there had been a temporal creation of the universe or that it was eternal? The dialogue was notoriously ambiguous on this point and already in the Academy the debate among exegetes had been very

13 For a list of Plato's quotations in the *Moralia*, see Giavatto (2010), improving on Helmbold and O'Neil (1959).

14 A very useful collection of essays on Plutarch on God, from a philosophical, historical and religious perspective, is Hirsch-Luipold (2005).

heated.[15] A major role, on this point, was played by Aristotle. He read the *Timaeus* literally, claiming that it endorsed a creationist view and argued in favor of the opposite thesis of the eternity of the universe. His arguments were powerful and exerted great influence. Remarkably, most other Academics, perhaps influenced by Aristotle's own view, interpreted Plato as endorsing the eternalist view and explained away the phrases of the dialogue that leaned toward creationism, as metaphorical or "didactic". According to Speusippus and Xenocrates, Plato wrote *as if* the Demiurge created the universe in order to make as clear as possible a very complicated problem, arguing that a correct reading of the text shows that he supported the eternalist thesis. This was also the view of most Early Imperial Platonists, but not of Plutarch who argued that such a reading was an intolerable concession to Aristotle and a betrayal of Plato's theological message. If one accepts that the universe is eternal, the consequence is that there would no longer be any need of God, contradicting Plato's most important doctrine. Therefore there is no need to find in the *Timaeus* what the dialogue does not say. Plutarch's commitment to the theological interpretation of Plato provided him with strong arguments in defense of the creationist view, in opposition to the majority of Platonists.

Another controversial problem was the status of the Ideas.[16] Again, the *Timaeus* was the reference text and the source of all the difficulties. In modern readings it is clear that the Ideas are the most important principle, whereas the Demiurge is a sort of intermediary cause. Once the Demiurge has become the most important principle, that is God, what is the role of the Ideas? In Early Imperial centuries the standard account was that the Ideas had to be regarded as the thoughts of God. The Ideas were the thoughts that God was thinking while creating and ruling the universe. This is a brilliant, but controversial, doctrine. It offers a welcome solution to the relation of the two principles (God and the Ideas); but it does not explain precisely the ontological status of the Ideas. Are they simply thoughts (in God's mind), contrary to what one reads in the *Parmenides* (132b–c)? This was a much-debated problem for Platonists then; remarkably, it is precisely on this point that Plotinus will break with his colleagues developing a different account of Plato's epistemology and

15 The inescapable study remains Baltes (1976); on Plutarch's thesis see pages 38–45. The most important texts are *An. procr.* 1013d–1017c; *Quaest. plat.* 1002e–1003b and 1007d. The Lamprias Catalogue informs us of a treatise entitled *On the Fact that in Plato's view the Universe had a Beginning* (n° 66). It is interesting to remark that Plutarch's view was shared also by other Platonists, and in particular by Atticus, see fr. 4 des Places.

16 In general, see Baltes (1998), 215–373; more concise but still very usefull is Ferrari (2005). With specific regard to Plutarch, I follow Ferrari (1996) against Schoppe (1994).

metaphysics.[17] Yet Plutarch, somewhat surprisingly, did not endorse the doctrine of the Ideas as thoughts of God and is in general very reticent about the mode of existence that he envisages for them. To be sure, he mentions them;[18] but he appears to conflate them with God, leaving the problem of their relation open.[19] This reticence has been cited by many scholars as a proof that Plutarch was not a deep thinker. This may be so, but there is another explanation too that needs to be taken into account as it will help us to detect another feature of his Platonism. Plutarch does not dwell on this topic, because he is sceptical that human beings can precisely know the nature of the first principles and their mutual relations. Surprisingly, perhaps, from the point of view of a modern reader, many ancient Platonists shared the view that Ideas are not properly knowable by human beings. Plutarch emphasized this point to the extent that his philosophy has been qualified as a sort of "metaphysical scepticism".[20] Given that philosophy and Plato's interpretation overlap, this qualification applies to Plutarch's interpretation of Plato too.[21]

Plutarch's peculiar scepticism has been the object of many debates among scholars, and reasonably so.[22] This is the most original feature of his thought, and what substantially distinguishes him from other Platonists of the time, not only from a theoretical but also from an historical perspective. Indeed, the leaning towards scepticism also raises questions about the Hellenistic Academy, whose heritage nearly all Imperial Platonists rejected. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to claim that Plutarch's philosophy (and his interpretation of Plato) can be reduced to a return to the New Academy, for the opposite is the case, as the *Adversus Colotem* shows. To put it briefly, Plutarch's argument is the following: 1) Scepticism is the result of any empiricist approach; 2) Hellenistic Academics were radical sceptics only with regard to empirical knowledge, but were not, in principle, rejecting metaphysics. This explains why they were part of the Platonist tradition.

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17 I refer to Bonazzi (2016), 117–51 for a discussion of this problem.

18 Along with the passages in the surviving works (*De Is. et Os.* 382d–383a, *De def. or.* 428b–c, *Plat. quaest.* III, *An. procr.* 1023b–c, *Adv. Col.* 1114c–f and 1115e–f), in the unfortunately lost treatises entitled *Where are the Forms?* and *The Manner of the Partecipation of Matter in the Forms, namely that it constitutes the primary Bodies* (Lamprias Catalogue, n° 67–68).

19 Very useful on this point is Ferrari (1995), 231–69.

20 Donini (1986), 213, followed by Bonazzi (2016), 97–105.

21 See *De def. or.* 430f–431a and *De sera* 549e–f.

22 For a useful *status quaestionis*, see Opsomer (1998), with the critical remarks of Donini (2003) and the further comments of Opsomer (2005a).

As should be clear from what we have so far seen, Plutarch's "scepticism" – a useful term which needs to be used cautiously – leads in the opposite direction from a New Academic reading, namely towards an appropriation of the Hellenistic Academy within the bounds of a theologically- and metaphysically-oriented Platonism. Academic scepticism is essentially epistemological and rests on the claim that we do not have a criterion which enables us to distinguish truth from falsehood. Plutarch's scepticism is metaphysical, i. e. it (somehow dogmatically) argues for the existence of a two-leveled world and for the dependence of the sensible world on the intelligible/divine world, but at the same time it emphasizes the impossibility of a real and exhaustive grasp of these ultimate principles. This admittedly interesting interpretation of Plato and his (entire) tradition was probably given exposure in the already mentioned, and unfortunately lost, treatise *On the Unity of the Academy from the time of Plato*.[23]

III.

A very similar view appears to be endorsed also by the anonymous commentator in a passage which deserves close scrutiny. At stake is Plato's *Theaetetus*, where Socrates says that "there is no wisdom" in him (150c4). The commentator first explains that this profession of ignorance has to be taken in a qualified and not absolute sense, and then makes a more general comment on Plato's philosophy:

> Some people infer from these words that Plato was an Academic in the sense of not having doctrines. My account will show that even other members of the Academy did, with very few exceptions, have doctrines and that the Academy is unified by the fact that the members hold their most important doctrines in common with Plato. In any case, the fact that Plato held doctrines and declared them with conviction can be grasped from Plato himself. (54.39–55.13) (trans.) G. Boys-Stones

The meaning of this phrase is not entirely clear. In particular scholars debate on the identity of those "few" who endorse a radically sceptical interpretation

23 I argue for this interpretation, against Babut (1994) and (2007) Academic interpretation, in Bonazzi (2012a).

of Plato.[24] But the main point is clear – Plato is regarded as an Academic because he held doctrines. Which doctrines is not stated, but elsewhere the commentator speaks for instance of reminiscence (47.46–48.8), which in turn clearly implies the existence of the Ideas. Therefore, if you are a follower of Plato, an Academic, you must endorse such doctrines. Even though the commentator never explicitly defends such doctrines *in propria persona*, the most reasonable conclusion is that he presented himself as an Academic too, that is a follower of Plato and endorsed these very same doctrines.

A second problem concerns the stance of the Hellenistic Academy. Much depends on the meaning of "Academic" in the commentary: if, as has been argued, it refers to the Old Academy and not to the Hellenistic Academy,[25] it is evident that the anonymous commentator should be listed among the majority of those Platonists who excluded Arcesilaus, Carneades and Philo of Larissa from the Platonist tradition. But that this is not the case is shown by another passage in which the anonymous commentator admits the Hellenistic Academics into the tradition of Platonism by presenting them as Platonists *in terra infidelium*.[26] Hellenistic Academics faced philosophers such as the Stoics and Epicureans who were (at least in the eyes of the anonymous commentator) materialists and empiricists. (Academic) Scepticism, to be distinguished from Pyrrhonism, is the dialectical view they adopted against those schools. Indeed, if you want to build knowledge and philosophy on empiricist and materialist grounds the only possible conclusion will be scepticism (see 70.5–26, quoted below). But, in principle at least, this does not exclude the compatibility of their philosophy with Platonist dualism. As we have seen this was the case for Plutarch, who presented the Hellenistic Academics as compatible with Platonism on the ground that their philosophy showed the inconsistency of materialism and empiricism and opened the way to metaphysical dualism. In spite of the brevity of the surviving part of the commentary, this also appears to be the anonymous commentator's stance. In other words, like Plutarch, the anonymous commentator appears to have endorsed a "Platonist reading of the Academy", and by implication a unitarian interpretation of the entire tradition stemming from Plato.

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24 For Arcesilaus see Sedley (1995), 540; Carneades or Clitomachus see Tarrant (1985), 63; Aenesidemus see Ioppolo (2004), 428–42; Favorinus see Bonazzi (2003), 64. Perhaps, suspension of judgment is the wiser conclusion. For this see Opsomer (1998), 64–66. In any case it cannot be the entire Hellenistic Academy as suggested by Glucker (1978), 304–6, because, as we will shortly see, the anonymous commentator was ready to include it in the Platonist tradition.

25 Glucker (1978), 304–6.

26 For a detailed analysis see Bonazzi (2013a).

This interpretation is further confirmed by the genealogy of Platonism he drew. As already observed, the problem for Platonists at the time was to account for the different interpretations of Plato that were circulating, and more precisely for the sceptical Plato. The majority of them appears to have simply rejected scepticism. Plutarch on the contrary tried to find a place for this interpretation, but in the surviving texts he never combines the doctrinal, perhaps "Pythagorean", and the sceptical, "Socratic", interpretation.[27] This is precisely what we have in the anonymous, who explicitly keeps together the two traditions:

> *Pythagoras* was the first to use the growing argument, and *Plato* used it as we noted in commenting on the *Symposium*. *Members of the Academy* argue in this direction as well: they themselves are clear that they believe in growth, but since the Stoics establish this when it does not need proof, they show us that, if someone wishes to prove what is obvious, someone else will easily find more persuasive arguments to the contrary. (70.5–26) (trans.) G. Boys-Stones

This is a remarkable text, which confirms his proximity to Plutarch. Unfortunately, we are not able to say whether it is also the case for the anonymous commentator that we can speak of "metaphysical scepticism". It might be that he endorsed a more doctrinal view of Plato (and of the Hellenistic Academy in consequence).[28] Still the parallels with Plutarch are worthy of consideration, insofar as they show the peculiarity of their interpretation in a very dynamic moment in the history of Platonism.

IV.

So far we have reconstructed Plutarch's and the anonymous' account of Plato as if it was matter of school debates against the supporters of other interpretations, be it other Platonists (such as those who argued against scepticism, for instance Antiochus in the first century BCE or Numenius of Apamea in the second century AD) or members of other schools (such as the Stoic Panetius and Posidonius). In the case of the anonymous the surviving testimonies do

27 See *De Is. et Os.* 370d–f for the "Pythagorean" genelogy and *Adv. Col.* 1121f–1122a for the "Socratic-Academic" genealogy; cf. the remarks of Donini (1999b).

28 See Brittain (2001), 236–42.

not allow the author to say much more. For all that we know about him is that he was a school teacher whose commentary shows how he interpreted the *Theaetetus* and accounted for Plato's philosophy. The case of Plutarch is different, as we have seen; he was not only a teacher, for we, also, have many other texts, in addition to the technical texts, which enable us to enlarge our understanding of his Plato's interpretation. Indeed, in comparison with other (Platonist) philosophers of the time Plutarch appears to endorse a reading of Plato that goes well beyond school debates. Plutarch's ambition, as we can reconstruct it from his works, is to present Plato as the guide for the entire Greek world, outside the close realm of the schools. This is another remarkable feature of his interpretation that needs to be taken into account.

In order to better appreciate the sense and the originality of this interpretation, it is useful to start with the traditional opposition between the active and the contemplative life. The debate on the best life is as ancient as Greek literature: in archaic poets such as Sappho we find the first instances of these debates which became one of the hottest topics of discussion among philosophers.[29] Particularly important, in this regard, was Aristotle, who radically distinguished between two kinds of life, practical and political on one side, theoretical and contemplative on the other, opting for the latter as the best and most apt for human beings.[30] The most eloquent text occurs in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (X 7). But it is remarkable that this text clearly refers to some passages of Plato's dialogues. More precisely, as many scholars have already pointed out, a key passage for Aristotle was the last part of the *Timaeus*, 90b–c.[31] We do not know how much influence this retrojection proved to be for Academics, but once again one can detect an affinity between Aristotle and the other Academics, for these latter too opted for the contemplative life as the best life. This is a possible reading of Plato, which was later endorsed by many other Platonists.[32]

But it is not the only possible one, as the case of Plutarch shows. Plutarch is a supporter of a completely different reading of Plato, which stresses the practical and political importance of this philosophy.[33] The reason for doing so is, again, his independence from Aristotle. The problem, for the other Platonists

29 See for instance Festugière (1971).

30 For an exhaustive overview see Gastaldi (2003).

31 Sedley (1999a) and Long (2014), 153–8.

32 See Joly (1956), 130–31 on Xenocrates; Jaeger (1928) on the Old Academy, Bénatouïl (2007) on the Hellenistic Academy; Linguiti (2012b) on Plotinus, Porphyry. More in general, see Neschke-Hentschke (1995), 203–16.

33 I argue for this interpretation in Bonazzi (2012b). If the distance from Aristotle is clear, it is remarkable to note the parallels with the Stoic tradition, see for instance Bénatouïl (2009).

was that, once they had adopted the Aristotelian distinction between theoretical and practical sciences, they were somehow forced to distinguish between the two, giving preeminence to the first. Insofar as he does not appear to endorse such a distinction, Plutarch can stress with much more force the strict union between *theoria* and *praxis*. *Praxis* is the direct consequence of *theoria*; and given that the primary object of *theoria* is God and the divine realm, ethics and politics can be regarded as the attempt to translate into the human world the order and harmony of the divine creation of the universe.[34] In the terms of the philosophical debates the *telos* (goal) for Platonists was assimilation to God, *homoiosis toi theoi*. In general this was taken as an exhortation to distance oneself from the miseries of this world; an escape, in other words. For Plutarch the opposite was the case. Theology is the true foundations for the human world. Plutarch's Platonism can be therefore described as a kind of political theology,[35] with the precise meaning of "political", for Plutarch, being tantamount to "ethical".[36] As Plato himself often repeats in the dialogues, real politics means to take care of souls.[37] This is precisely what Plutarch appeals to in many of his texts. The aim is to reproduce in the soul the order by which God ordered the universe. An eloquent testimony comes from the *De sera numinis vindicta* 550D–E:

> Consider first that God, as Plato says, offers himself to all as a pattern of every excellence, thus rendering human virtue, which is in some sort an assimilation to himself, accessible to all who can "follow God". Indeed this was the origin of the change whereby universal nature, disordered before, became a "cosmos': it came to resemble after a fashion and participate in the form and excellence of God. The same philosophers says further that nature kindled vision in us so that the soul, beholding the heavenly motions and wondering at the sight, should grow to accept and cherish

34 See *Ad princ. ind.* 780e–f, 781f–782a; *Vit. Phoc.* 2.9.

35 This is not the place to settle the issue between the "contemplative" and the "political" Plato. At any rate there are several passages which clearly supports Plutarch's interpretation, from *Grg.* to *Rep.* (see more precisely 500d). Moreover in the authoritative *Tht.* 176b to fly from here goes together with becoming just.

36 Another qualification is needed. Given what we have said before with regard to his scepticism, it is evident that *theoria* and contemplation cannot be taken as implying that a perfect knowledge of God and his truth is possible. What accurately defines the philosopher is not that he holds the ultimate truth about the gods, but that he strives towards this kind of knowledge, which yeald ever-increasing degrees of awareness. This marks a difference from texts such as the pseudopythagorean treatises, see Bonazzi (2012b), 151.

37 *Grg.* 521d is the most explicit text.

> all that moves in stateliness and order, and thus came to hate discordant and errant passions and to shun the aimless and haphazard as the source of al vice and jarring error; for man is fitted to derive from God no greater blessing that to become settled in virtue through copying and aspiring to the beauty and the goodness that are his.[38] (trans.) Einarson and De Lacy

But even more eloquent, because of the direct reference to Plato is the following text from the *Life of Dion*:

> Dion therefore exhorted him [*sc.* Dionysius] to apply himself to study, and to use every entreaty with the first of philosophers [*sc.* Plato] to come to Sicily; and when he came, to become his disciple, in order that his character might be regulated by the principles of virtue, and that he might be conformed to that divinest and most beautiful model of all being, in obedience to whose direction the universe issues from disorder into order; in this way he would procure great happiness for himself, and great happiness for his people. (*Dion* 10, 1–3) (trans.) Perrin

Plato, the philosopher par excellence, is the guide who helps men become virtuous (especially righteous), i. e. to strive towards divinity as far as possible, engendering in themselves that order and harmony which serve as the foundations of collective and individual happiness. In short, this is the lesson drawn from Platonism, which not only amounts to a set of doctrines but realizes itself as a way of life: a *bios philosophos* capable of combining *theoria* and *praxis*, overcoming the juxtaposition between *bios theoretikos* (or *scholastikos*) and *bios praktikos*; a *bios* that over the centuries has yielded many virtuous deeds, thereby confirming its superiority over other philosophies.[39] It was precisely as Plato recommended. For the human world to be freed from evils and injustices, philosophy is needed.[40] But not philosophy in general: philosophy is Plato's philosophy.

Plato's importance, and the importance of the philosophical tradition stemming from him,[41] therefore, goes well beyond the walls of the philosophical schools. It pertains to the entire Greek world, as this text from the *De genio*

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38 *De sera* 550d–e; see also *Max. cum phil.* 776c; *An seni* 796c–f; *Praec.* 799b, 800a–b. On this point see Trapp (2004).

39 Bonazzi (2012b), 154–5.

40 Plato *Rep.* 473c–d.

41 As easy to predict, Plutarch repeatedly underlines the political merits of the Academic-Platonist tradition, see for instance *Dion* 1.4, *Philopoemen* 1.1, *Adv. Col.* 1126b–d.

Socratis, teaches, reporting what Plato himself was supposed to have said when explaining to the people of Delos a mysterious message from the God:

> [T]hey [*i.e.* the Greeks] had to understand that the god was ordering the entire Greek nation to give up war and its miseries and cultivate the Muses, and by calming their passions through the practice of discussion and study of mathematics, so to live with one another that their intercourse should be not injurious, but profitable.[42] (trans.) Einarson and De Lacy

Plutarch's times were risky and exciting not only for philosophers, but more in general for all the Greeks. It was a difficult period in which the Roman domination forced them to redefine the sense of what "Greekness" is.[43] Also outside the philosophical schools this was a time of identity crisis. Within this context, the ambition of Plutarch's project becomes clear. It was not only a matter of defending one interpretation of Plato over the others, because the competition was not restricted to the philosophical schools only. At stake was the unification of the entire Greek tradition under the aegis of Plato: a task which was not easy.[44] This project clearly confirms the original and interesting position of Plutarch in the context of Early Imperial Platonism.

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42 *De genio Socratis* 579c–d. Few lines before, at 579a, the same recommendation is attributed to the God directly.

43 Cf. for instance Whitmarsh (2001).

44 See Pelling (2004). I investigate the similar problem with reference to the *De genio Socratis* in Bonazzi (forthcoming).

CHAPTER 8

Theon of Smyrna: Re-thinking Platonic Mathematics in Middle Platonism

Federico M. Petrucci

Broadly speaking, an interest in mathematics characterizes the history of Platonism.[1] However, it manifests itself in different ways. The most familiar approach involves the use of the "potentialities" of mathematical objects as ontological items. Indeed, this is a typical element of Platonic instruction from the Old Academy to Neoplatonism, rooted both in philosophic historiography and in various Platonic passages (of *Parmenides*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*): from Xenocrates to Eudorus, from Plutarch to Proclus, ontological principles were often identified with notions somehow borrowed from mathematics, such as the One and the Dyad. This does not imply, however, that such notions maintained their mathematical status: rather, in consequence of their "re-use" as ontologically defined items, they were eventually transfigured, while their fundamental properties (e. g. extreme simplicity of the one/monad) were considered in a new perspective. Accordingly, this use of mathematics (including arithmological speculation)[2] is somehow non-mathematical, and will not be the focus of this paper.[3] However, two approaches clearly show a direct commitment to mathematical (i. e., arithmetical, geometrical, musical and astronomical)[4] doctrines as such, whose goal was to outline (if at different levels) a

1 See O'Meara (1989); Dörrie & Baltes (1993), 266–79; Fowler (1999); Giardina (1999); Radke (2003).

2 Arithmological speculation, somehow arising in ancient Pythagoreanism and recovered in the Old Academy, underwent fundamental developments in the Hellenistic age, e. g. Mansfeld (1971), was practiced by later Platonists, and in some context was used in the exegesis of Plato's psychogony to discover the "potentialities" of the numbers employed by Plato. See Petrucci (2012), 408–27.

3 Exceptions involve those authors, such as Nicomachus and Theon, who ascribed to numbers (*qua* numbers) a specific ontological status; in this case, arithmology could be a means to indicate "qualities" instantiated by number-intelligibles.

4 It is noteworthy that classifications of mathematics in antiquity – not only those based in the *quadrivium*-structure – chiefly depend on Plato's account in *Rep.*VII. See Vitrac (2005). For mathematics based in the *quadrivium*-structure see Hadot (2006).

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"Platonic system of mathematics": some Platonists[5] (including Nicomachus of Gerasa) wished to establish a certain model of mathematics by applying their own Platonic perspective to the task of writing technical treatises. Others (including Theon of Smyrna) took the dialogues (especially *Timaeus*) as starting points to develop such a system exegetically. In this paper, priority is given to the latter group, for reasons which shall emerge in due course.

I Nicomachus: "Platonically Orientated" Mathematics

In the Old Academy a deep and variegated interest in mathematics found fertile ground, from both a theoretical and a technical point of view. While the latter is exemplified by Eudoxus' seminal researches, it is likely that arithmogeometry was also systematically formulated in this context:[6] numbers are geometrically structured aggregates of monads, and are provided with related properties and reciprocal relationships. Traces of such an approach virtually disappear until the first centuries of our era, when Nicomachus of Gerasa wrote his *Introductio Arithmetica*. This work, which soon became a reference text, is at face value a comprehensive handbook of arithmogeometry, although this entailed further important topics, such as an exposition of ancient theory of ratios and proportions.[7] Its historical relevance mainly depends on the fact that it establishes a complete and systematic survey of (partly non-Euclidean) arithmetic, namely arithmogeometry. In this way, Nicomachus locates himself in an established tradition: the Old Academy's legacy had probably been recovered at least as early as Moderatus of Gades,[8] and Theon of Smyrna opens his *Expositio* with an arithmogeometrical survey. In the next centuries Platonists wrote works inspired by Nicomachus' (such as Iamblichus' *In Nicomachi Arithmeticam*, Domninus' *Encheiridion*, Asclepius' and Philoponus' *Commentaries*).[9] But Nicomachus applied a similar approach also to music: he wrote

5 I shall avoid the category of "Neo-Pythagoreanism". See Centrone (2000).

6 See Burkert (1972), 401–47, esp. 446–7.

7 Most relevant studies are D'Odge (1938); Bertier (1976); O'Meara (1989), 14–23; Dillon (1977/1996), 352–61; Mansfeld (1998), 82–91; Giardina (1999), 36–52; Radke (2003), *passim*; Helmig (2007). As to its posterity, besides related writings, it is telling that according to Marinus (*Vit. Procl.* 28) Proclus considered himself to be a reincarnation of Nicomachus.

8 See Centrone and Macris (2005) for a survey. Important mathematical interests must be ascribed also to Thrasyllus, on whom see Tarrant (1993).

9 On Domninus see Riedleberger (2013); on Iamblichus' *In Nicom.* see Vinel (2014); on Philoponus' *Commentary* see Giardina (1999).

an *Encheiridion* of harmonics, where he synthetically dealt with fundamental elements of harmonic theory.

An inquiry into the "Platonism" of Nicomachus' *Introductio* must consider two interacting aspects: its overall philosophical function and the Platonic doctrines it underpins. On the one hand, Nicomachus' project is an attempt to produce a mathematical system *from a Platonic point of view*. This can be deduced not only from his commitment to a "version" of arithmetic (arithmogeometry) typical of the Platonic tradition, but above all from the premise of the *Introductio*, where the importance and status of arithmetic are sustained by referring to fundamental passages of Plato's corpus, primarily (I 3.19–5.12) the *Timaeus*' cosmogony, but also the last pages of the *Epinomis* (I 7.4–8.7) and *Republic* VII (I 8.8–9.4). This leads him to consider the relationship between mathematics and Plato's cosmogony, depending on his belief that numbers have an ontological status. Indeed, the most important contribution of the *Introductio*'s first chapters is to outline (somewhat ambiguously) this status, which has a clear Platonic inspiration: numbers are somehow the fundamental elements constituting the intelligible structure of reality, although the relationship between numbers and forms in Nicomachus' system is quite controversial.[10] This means that arithmetical notions developed in the *Introductio* must somehow be considered as revealing intrinsic relationships not only among numbers, but above all among intelligibles.[11] Nonetheless, although Nicomachus produces a "Platonically-grounded" arithmetic, he draws from the dialogues only its theoretical framework, while contents and specific theorems are plausibly translated from a well established arithmogeometrical tradition.[12]

Thus, Nicomachus' approach was similar to that found in other important attempts to realize a mathematical system *from a Platonic point of view*: treatises

10 Divergent answers to this *vexata quaestio* have been given: 1) Numbers *are* the Forms. See Dillon (1977/1996), 355; 2) Numbers are the Forms' intrinsic structure. See O'Meara (1989), 22; 3) Numbers are intelligibles among others. See Dörrie & Baltes (1993), 356–7; 4) Numbers replace the Forms at a cosmic level, but mathematical objects properly speaking, i. e. those discussed in technical sections of the *Introductio*, are immanent universals. See Helmig (2007).

11 Such a perspective is adopted also by Theon. He takes ἀριθμοί to be transcendent intelligibles, while ἀριθμητοί are corresponding immanent intelligibles (18.3–20.5); this explicit distinction makes it clear that arithmogeometrical theorems of the *Expositio* do concern transcendent intelligibles.

12 Compare Nicomachus' *Harmonicum Encheiridion*, which sometimes takes into account Plato's text (as for a reference to Plato's diatonic harmonic system in *Tim.* at 251.12–13), but in general does not make the technical content of his work depend on any Platonic passage.

of this kind are, for instance, Porphyry's *Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics*, or Proclus' Euclidean *Commentary* and *Planetary Hypotyposis*. Here Platonists did not establish a direct relationship between Plato's texts and the technical topics they dealt with: rather, although addressing a certain mathematical field by appealing to Platonic doctrine, they are committed more to *applying a Platonic perspective* to mathematics than to a *reception* of Plato's mathematics.

II Theon's *Expositio* and Platonic Mathematical Exegesis

As long as "mathematical Platonism" is investigated (as usually is) only within the confines of writings belonging to the previous category, it would seem that Platonists developed mathematical research in a rather loose relationship with Plato's works. This is not the case, however, for in the Platonic tradition another perspective can be detected, which is eminently related to the exegesis of the dialogues, especially the *Timaeus*.[13] Indeed, a focused attention to "mathematical" aspects of Plato's psychogony gave rise to an exegetical tendency, which "applied" some mathematical (especially musical and astronomical) notions to Plato's text[14] with the aim of producing a sort of "Platonic" system of mathematics *emerging from the dialogue*(*s*).

1) *Theon's Expositio*

The only complete witness for this approach is Theon of Smyrna's *Expositio* (I–II AD).[15] Theon wrote also (at least) a commentary on Plato's *Republic* and was not only a mathematician; rather, as Proclus (*In Tim.* I 82, 14–15) indicates, he was a Platonist, and practiced a standard exegetical activity on Plato's texts. However, his extant work, the *Expositio rerum mathematicarum ad legendum Platonem utilium*, is not *prima facie* a commentary: it looks more

13 See above all Ferrari (2000), and Petrucci (2012), (2015), and (2016).

14 Outlining the exegetical forms in which such an approach was realized would take too long. It would be safe enough to state that Middle Platonists often focused their attention on specific topics and textual sections of dialogues, i. e. specific *zetemata*, although this does not imply that their commentaries did not consider *at all* other sections of the same dialogue, or dialogues in their entirety. This point granted, technical exegeses could either be part of more wide-ranging exegetical writings (as Plutarch's *An. Procr.*, or Severus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*), or represent the thematic core of specific exegetical writings (as in the case of Theon's *Expositio*).

15 On Theon and his *Expositio* (also for a commentary on passages I refer to) see Petrucci (2012). For a different perspective see Delattre-Biencourt (2010).

like a handbook of mathematics, since it consists in three sections, devoted to arithmetic, music and astronomy, prefaced by a short introduction. Each part gives an outline of a certain branch of mathematics: the part concerning arithmetic (18.3–46.19) opens with a definition of number and unity, and then explains relationships among numbers by classifying them according to their arithmogeometrical nature; the one about music (46.20–119.21) opens with a series of definitions of basic notions and then focuses mainly on arithmetical elements grounding harmonics (such as ratios, proportions, means); the astronomical section (120.1–205.6), after stating the spherical shape of the Earth and the cosmos and the order of the planets, extensively explains the regularity of planetary motion by appealing to the authoritative Hellenistic models, that of the epicycle and the eccentric circle.

At face value, then, the *Expositio* is a technical treatise. This is a totally misleading definition, however. First, one must consider the specific role of arithmetic (esp. 18.3–21.19), providing a sort of ontological frame for what follows. According to Theon's material (which he probably selects from Moderatus' repertory),[16] numbers canonically consist of monads arithmogeometrically ordered: units forming a number are represented as points, and arranged as particular geometrical order depending on the number's factors (for instance, number 6 is formed by six units-points, and, its factors being 2 and 3, it will correspond to a rectangole having sides respectively of two and three units-points). However, since Theon considers numbers to be transcendent intelligibles and the μονάς to be their ἀρχή, one must ascribe to him an ontology grounded in the priority of the part over the whole. This would be consistent with an Academic perspective (see e. g. Xenocr. fr. 121–122 Isnardi) and with the principles of arithmogeometry (and arithmetic as well), but would interestingly conflict with alleged "mathematical" Middle-Platonic ontologies, such as that of Eudorus.[17] This framework (and its implications) are not so different from Nicomachus'. Secondly, and most interestingly, both the length and the level of deepening of Theon's musical and astronomical analyses do not match standards ascribable to handbooks (such as Geminus' and Cleomedes' astronomical writings, or Gaudentius' musical treatise): on the one hand, Theon's grasp of technical matter is much poorer;[18] on the other hand, Theon's

16 See Petrucci (2012), *ad loc.*, for a demonstration.

17 A valuable account in Bonazzi (2005). On these aspects Petrucci (2012), *ad loc.*

18 E. g., the tone, corresponding to 9/8, is said (75.15–25) not to be an epimoric ratio. See Petrucci (2013). Other remarkable shortcomings are, e. g., the idea of a latitudinal anomaly of the Sun's motion (134.13–21), or the mathematically absurd demonstration of the indivisibility of the tone (70.7–72.20).

discussion of some topics (such as the ratios of concords, or the model of the epicycle) are usually lacking in pre-Ptolemaic technical handbooks, which follow traditional patterns. In other terms, Theon's thematic selection can depend neither on adherence to the genre of technical handbook nor on Theon's particular skills. Accordingly, another criterion must be discovered. Closer observation shows that Theon's agenda directly depends on technical exegesis of Plato's *Timaeus*. Some examples will help understand Theon's project.

a) After introducing fundamental notions of harmonic theory, Theon deals with some problems, which on closer analysis appear as technical explanations of Plato's way of structuring the soul as a harmonic system in the *Timaeus*. The last among them consists in the explanation of the reason why the tone cannot be divided into two halves and the traditional ratio of *leimma* (Platonic semitone) is 256/243. (69.12–72.20) This discussion has an exegetical nature: Theon sheds light onto the logic of ratios and principles (as the indivisibility of the tone) applied by Plato, as made clear also from explicit references (69.6 and 9). In order to achieve this task, however, Theon has not only to clarify technical principles, but also (and above all) to refute those who sustained that the tone is divisible in two halves, that is Aristoxenus and his followers, who held a leading position in musical studies. He achieves this point both by producing an (erroneous) arithmetical proof[19] and by claiming that it is also impossible to divide in perfect halves any perceptible thing. The latter point is directed against the Aristoxenian perspective: Theon defends Plato by depriving non-numerical analysis of any grasp on reality. Accordingly, the very fact that Plato adopted the *leimma* is for Theon the starting point to demonstrate the logic of this operation and to establish Plato's perspective as *technically* authoritative against Aristoxenus.
b) A fundamental section of musical handbooks consisted in explaining scales according to different genres and *tropoi*. In Theon's *Expositio* (87.4–93.16), however, only the system having a diatonic doric structure, that is the one of Plato's world soul, is carefully reproduced (the source being Thrasyllus). In addition, the system is exemplified by means of numbers and notes, which strictly represent those deducible from Plato's *divisio animae*. While recovering a typical feature of

19 Traditional demonstrations are those of Archytas (T 19) and the Euclidean *Sectio Canonis* (152.1–153.3); see also Plutarch, *An. procr.* 1021c10–d10 and Gaudentius, *Isagoge harmonica* 343.1–10.

technical treatises, Theon refashions it by taking Plato's psychogony as a cornerstone to select technical material.

c) Before addressing planetary motions, Theon establishes the correct order of the planets (138.9–147.6). His strategy, however, is quite puzzling. He first considers the following order (from the Earth): Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. This is well attested in ancient astronomy: scientists already agreed on it before Ptolemy.[20] Theon, however, does not ascribe it to astronomers, but to the author of a Pythagorean-flavoured cosmological poem, Alexander, who moreover is credited with locating each planet at specific harmonic intervals. Theon rejects such a musical structure (although accepting the principle that planets are harmonically arranged), and, most importantly, simply dismisses Alexander's order as wrong. He then ascribes an order giving the Sun second place (just above the Moon) to Eratosthenes and some unspecified mathematicians, who however are said not to be able to reach an agreement on reciprocal positions of the so-called isodromes (Mercury and Venus). Only at this climactic point Plato is evoked. Theon quotes a passage of the Myth of Er (*Rep.* X 616b2–617b8), where Plato shows (δηλοῖ, 143.14–15) the order of the planetary spheres: the Sun is just above the Moon and above it there are, respectively, Venus and Mercury. Two points are worth noting. First, the direct use of the *Republic* does not imply that Theon is not considering here the *Timaeus* as an object of exegesis; on the contrary, the *Republic* is invoked as the place where Plato *explicitly* indicates the order of the planets and their harmonic relationships, while the *Timaeus* (esp. 38c9–d6) offers an obscurer account. This means that Theon takes the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* to describe the same cosmology – a "Platonic astronomical structure". Secondly, Theon strongly marginalizes that order (with the Sun in a central position) which astronomers would have preferred: he ascribes it to the poet Alexander, credits "mathematicians" with a different (broad) account and finally considers Plato's position to be authoritative from an astronomical point of view.

d) It is a Hellenistic discovery that planets move also in the depth of the universe (i. e., they produce the anomalistic motion): to explain this phenomenon, the models of the epicycle and of the eccentric circle

20 See e. g. Geminus, *Isagoge* I 24–30; Achilles, *Isagoge* 42.25–43.13; Cicero, *De divinatione* II 43.

were produced.[21] Of course, Plato was aware neither of the anomalistic motion nor (obviously) of models accounting for it: the cosmological structure hinted at in the *Timaeus* is strictly homocentric. Nonetheless, the most extensive part of Theon's astronomical section is devoted to the explanation of the models of the eccentric circle and the epicycle. Moreover, Theon explicitly states, by means of κατὰ λέξιν exegesis (188.25–189.6), that Plato did know these models and hinted at them (although ambiguously) in his writings. It is likely that the exegetical mechanism acts as follows: a) since no real alternative was available (according to Theon) to Hellenistic models, Plato *must* have already been aware of them; b) an exegete's task is to outline how they were implicitly supposed to work in the context of the *Timaeus*, and Plato hinted at them.[22] In this case, then, Plato's authority is established by ascribing to him the knowledge of those models, which were (unavoidably) regarded as authoritative.

These examples represent a repertory of exegetical perspectives on technical issues, which Theon directly draws from the *Timaeus*. So one can now outline the core assumptions of Theon's approach.

a) Plato's "technical" remarks stem from a mathematical system. Although Plato does not explain it completely and directly (but makes it act within the psychogony), he can be credited with the elaboration of a corpus of notions, forming the mathematical basis of his text. This allows one also to establish how other Platonic passages interact with it, as the joint use of the *Timaeus*' "astronomy" and the model drawn from the Myth of Er shows (see point "c" in the preceding list).
b) If this is the case, the authority of Plato's "mathematics" must be defended, and Plato must be respected as the discoverer of truths about music and astronomy. This involves, however, two kinds of difficulties. First, Plato's account sometimes coincides with positions, which at Theon's time were technically outmoded. In this case (as with the ratio

21 Although our knowledge of pre-Ptolemaic models is scarce, the reference to anomalistic motion was a quite common feature in handbooks and basic astronomic surveys: see e. g. Geminus, *Isagoge* I 13.1–18.4 and Cleomedes, *Caelestia* I 52.21–56.3.

22 For further exegetical puzzles see Petrucci (2012), 54–57. Recent enquiries have tried to emphasise the relationship between Theon's astronomy and contemporary technical writings (especially Ptolemy's) and *sphairopoiiai* – albeit leaving aside, to some extent, the philosophical meaning of Theon's operation. See esp. Jones (2015); Kalligas (2016).

of *leimma*, or the order of the planets), Theon tries to demonstrate the correctness of Plato's points *against* his technical opponents. Second, in cases where Theon is not in a condition to dismiss some scientific developments (as in the case of the Hellenistic planetary models), his effort consists in finding out exegetical mechanisms to indicate that Plato already knew and applied such models. As point "d" of the preceding list indicates, Theon's effort is that of applying standard exegetical methods (such as the κατὰ λέξιν exegesis, detecting specific and remote meanings in Plato's wording) in order to project on his text the awareness of post-Platonic discoveries. Weird might it seem, Theon is convinced – and he must have had some reasons to do so – that this risky application of such methods, in the frame of his allegiance to Plato, could have a good outcome.

c) Plato is in any case given precedence over mathematicians: he is the one who both discovered and put into effect those mathematical notions and assumptions which either are, or should be, still authoritative. Thus, Plato's text is central to an artificial debate testifying to the Master's authority.

In this context another important point must be made concerning the use and reception of Plato's text. As we have seen, elements of music and astronomy are inspired by the *Timaeus*' psychogony. However, the *Timaeus* is not the only text Theon uses to achieve his task. On the contrary, it seems that a fundamental methodological tool consists in the use of some passages of other dialogues to clarify, or expand on, the *Timaeus*. This strategy is applied both in a focused and a more general way. The most direct evidence of the former involves the use of *Republic* X in relation to the order of the planets, which we have already observed. Such a strategy, as we shall see, probably represents a topical application of the exegetical principle *Platonem ex Platone*. At the same time, however, for Theon the interaction among dialogues has also a more decisive philosophical pay-off, which can be detected in either implicit or explicit reference to the *Epinomis*. In fact, Theon seems to draw from this dialogue not only general notions concerning mathematics,[23] but above all the very idea of a Platonic system of mathematics. Theon's introduction (2.14–21) makes use

23 Such as the *cursus studiorum* of mathematics and their ethical functions: the *Epinomis*' account of these aspects is pointed out by means of quotations in the introduction (see above all 7.9–10.11, where Theon quotes from *Ep.* 977b9–d4, 977b7–978b1, 989b1–2 and d4–7, 990a4–b2 and c3–e2).

of a quotation of *Epinomis* 992a4–b1 to point out the idea that knowledge of mathematics is an absolutely necessary (and maybe sufficient) condition for becoming happy and supremely wise (εὐδαίμων and σοφώτατος). The idea that mathematics (i. e., Platonic mathematics) constitute a living system is upheld (84.7–14) by the quotation of *Epinomis* 991e1–992a1, which is interpreted as testifying to the idea that mathematics are bound together by ἀναλογία (84.7–8: "Plato seems to believe that there is a unique source of union of mathematics, deriving from proportion"). Given Theon's interest in the *Timaeus*' psychogony, however, this passage emphasizes also his fundamental commitment to the idea that the world is a mathematically ordered whole: the "soul's" proportion guarantees both the continuity of mathematics and the world's order.[24]

All in all, then, Theon's technical exegesis represents the clearest evidence of a mathematical Platonism based on the direct reception of Plato's texts (above all the *Timaeus*, but also the *Epinomis* and the *Republic*): the exegete takes them as the place where Plato *made use* of a system of mathematical doctrines, which he to some extent discovered. This could seem to be in contrast with the idea, widespread among Platonists (and to some extent stemming from the Old Academy: see Xenocr. fr. 87 Isnardi), that Pythagoras first discovered fundamental mathematical notions, such as the ratios of the concords (Theon, *Expos*. 56.9–58.12).[25] The contradiction is only apparent, however: according to a historiographical model, which applies also in the field of philosophical doctrine (e. g. Numen. fr. 24), although Pythagoras can be credited with having discovered certain doctrines at a general level, Plato is the one who perfected, applied, and really exploited these notions.

2) *Other Technical Exegeses*

As stated above, Theon's *Expositio* is a particularly valuable writing, since it is the only complete instance of a technical exegesis of Plato, i. e. of the Platonists' efforts to outline a system of Platonic mathematics drawn from the dialogues. Several parallel passages, however, both in specific treatises and in parts of more general writings, show that such an approach was not unusual.

The latter is the case of Plutarch's musical and astronomical remarks in the second part of the *De animae procreatione* (from chapter 29 on). Plutarch deals above all with musical problems and establishes a precise pattern of topics

24 A more detailed demonstration in Petrucci (2012), esp. 61–62. On the reception of the *Epinomis* in Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism see Gioè (2012), Giardina (2012), Linguiti (2012a).

25 But also the epicycles: Iamblichus, *VP* 6, 31, 5–12.

to be treated (1027c: the quantity of the numbers used in the *divisio animae*; their arrangement; their functions),[26] but devotes interesting remarks also to astronomical issues. It is noteworthy that in Plutarch's account as in Theon's both the order and the contents of mathematical discussions are directly determined by Plato's psychogony, which is taken to be a yardstick for establishing a correct approach to harmonic theory. For instance, this clearly emerges from the explanation of methods for discovering the arithmetic and harmonic means (1019e–f): Plutarch's account is mathematically inadequate owing to its lack of generality, since he focuses on methods specifically applicable to double and triple extremes, that is those to which arithmetic and harmonic means are applied in the *Timaeus*. Another interesting instance is the demonstration of the indivisibility of the tone (1020e–1022a): although Plutarch seems aware that the tone *qua* sensible interval *can* be divided in two halves, he rejects the effectiveness of an empirical evaluation by claiming that the mathematical proof of the indivisibility of 9/8 is compelling. In other terms, Plato's approach as such is superior to the Aristoxenian one. The priority of Plato's "mathematical" account is confirmed by astronomical remarks, especially those concerning the harmonic arrangement of the planets: also Plutarch uses *Republic* X to clarify this point (1029c3–8), and, exactly as Theon, rejects the technically accepted order of the planets and simply takes the Platonic one to be right.[27] One can conclude that Plutarch, even somehow more cautious than Theon,[28] is still committed to the idea that Plato did have his own "strictly mathematical" system, which is chiefly mirrored by the *Timaeus*' psychogony. If this is the case, however, one can infer that this is exactly the Platonic system of "mathematics" which is important for Plutarch: while he explicitly avoids committing himself too much to pure arithmology and arithmogeometry,[29] he not only paid attention to harmonic and astronomical problems deriving from the *Timaeus*, but probably also took *this* kind of mathematics to represent a fundamental aspect of reality.[30]

26 Moreover, this pattern was probably a traditional one: see Ferrari (2000), 204–8.

27 This use of *Rep.* X is inherited, *mutatis mutandis*, by Proclus, *in Tim.* III 60.25–67.18.

28 Plutarch is prepared to admit that the perceptible semitone might seem to be precisely half of a tone, although this is not actually the case; further, Plutarch does not seem prepared to ascribe to Plato the use of the model of the epicycle (*An. procr.* 1028b1).

29 The speech of Plutarch-character in the *De E* (387e–391e), appealing to arithmology and arithmogeometry, does not imply any commitment to it: see Ferrari (1995), 38–41 and Opsomer (2007), 388.

30 See Ferrari (1995).

Another case to consider is a fragment of the Platonist Aelianus' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Porphyry, *Harm.* 33.19–36.9). Although the nature of this commentary is obscure, the fragment shows that Aelianus somehow expanded on Plato's musical account by introducing basic definitions of musical notions, which were widely agreed on in the technical tradition, but were without doubt historically posterior to Plato.[31] This testifies again to the Platonists' attempt at deriving a complete harmonic theory from Plato's psychogony, crediting Plato with the use of an authoritative system of technical theory.

As a last test-case one can consider Dercyllides, whose astronomical exegesis of *Republic* X is quoted at the end of Theon's *Expositio* (198.14–204.21). Dercyllides seems to describe a sort of comprehensive astronomical system: his account entails an outline of the structure of the universe (considering relationships among the fundamental circles) and an explanation of planetary motions based on the models of the epicycle and the eccentric circle. Such an account, however, stems from a writing devoted to the Myth of Er – or, in any case, to passages from Plato's *Republic* (198.11–13). Therefore, Dercyllides integrates puzzling elements drawn from the myth of Er with features which the *Republic* can in no way testify to in order to outline a clear astronomical representation. Accordingly, in Dercyllides' opinion the passages of Plato's dialogues hinting at the astronomical structure of the world do foreshadow a complete system, already entailing fundamental Hellenistic discoveries as well.

This is only an outline of the much wider tradition of Platonic technical exegesis.[32] For sure, in the Hellenistic age both musical exegeses of Plato's *Timaeus* (starting from Crantor's commentary) and commentaries on mathematical sections of the *Republic* were written;[33] other nuclei of technical exegesis were then proposed in the Imperial age, as in the commentaries of Eudorus, Adrastus, and Severus;[34] finally, a sort of repertory of Platonic technical remarks on the *divisio animae* is also included in Proclus' *In Timaeum*.[35]

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31 A similar approach in Theon, *Expos.* 47.18–56.5.

32 See also Petrucci (2016) and (2017).

33 As Clearchus' exegesis on the mathematical section of Plato's *Rep.* (Athen. IX 393a = fr. 3 Wehrli).

34 Eudorus is a fundamental source for Plutarch's *An. procr.*, Adrastus for Theon's *Expositio*; for Severus see fr. 14–16 Gioè, on the harmonic structure of the soul.

35 On the astronomical aspects see Segonds (1987); for a comparison with Middle Platonic approach see Petrucci (2016) and (2017).

III Epilogue

According to established scholarly assumptions, a canonical image of "Platonic mathematics" in the Imperial age is likely to coincide with Nicomachus' approach: Platonists drawn from Plato's dialogues a commitment to mathematics (above all arithmogeometry) and as a consequence produced mathematical accounts *from a Platonic point of view*. As I tried to show, however, this is only a part of the history, and probably a less interesting one. Especially in the Imperial age there is another "mathematical" Platonism, based on the following (somewhat circular) principles: Plato's dialogues – especially, but not only, the *Timaeus*' psychogony – mirror a "system" of Platonic mathematics (namely music and astronomy), which the exegete must outline by expanding on specific passages; such a system must be considered as *technically* authoritative also against the standard technical model, and the exegete's task is to establish Plato's authority.

CHAPTER 9

Cupid's Swan from the Academy (*De Plat.* 1.1, 183): Apuleius' Reception of Plato

Geert Roskam

I By Way of Introduction: Methodological Orientation

Caveat lector: this chapter will focus on the vulgar Platonism of a superficial dilettante and would-be philosopher who more properly deserves the title of sophist. Nearly all the eminent specialists of Apuleius' philosophical works agree about this, as is illustrated by the following selective anthology:

> Nichts von all dem [*sc.* Theologen, Platoniker, Peripatetiker, Hermetiker, Zauberer] war er wohl wirklich, sicherlich nicht der *Platonicus nobilis*, als welchen Augustinus ihn schätzte, sondern am ehesten wohl das, als was ihn diese Arbeit am wenigsten würdigt: der Rhetor.[1]

> Der Platonismus des Apuleius von Madaura muß als Vulgär-Platonismus bezeichnet werden.[2]

> Apuleius was more interested in philosophy as part of general culture – the equipment of the complete rhetor – than in these disciplines as part of philosophy. […] What we must always bear in mind is that Apuleius, despite his protestations, is not a philosopher, and his value as evidence is thus dependent upon how well he is relaying to us his source or sources.[3]

> D'autre part, il [= Apuleius] faisait une carrière de rhéteur et d'homme de lettres, et l'on ne doit pas attendre d'un professionnel des conférences mondaines et du beau style, à la curiosité infatigable mais superficielle, dilettante et touche-à-tout, la profondeur et la constance d'un véritable penseur.[4]

1 Regen (1971), 110.
2 Dörrie (1976), 189–90.
3 Dillon (1977), 307 and 311.
4 Beaujeu (1983), 398.

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> But though Apuleius proclaimed himself a philosopher, his status as a star performer in Carthage, his obvious self-promotion and cult of his own personality, and his prodigiously displayed literary and scientific polymathy plainly allow us to designate him a Latin sophist.[5]

It is not difficult at all to add a great number of similar quotations, but these may suffice to introduce the current *communis opinio*. In this chapter, I would like to challenge this widely accepted view. Nevertheless, at first sight, it seems to rest on a painstaking analysis and evaluation of Apuleius' extant works, which are usually divided into two groups: a literary group (consisting of the *Metamorphoses*, the *Florida* and the *Apology*) and a philosophical one (containing *De deo Socratis*, *De Platone et eius dogmate*, *De mundo* and *Peri Hermeneias*).[6] As we shall see, however, such a dichotomy is far from unproblematic. Are the differences between the *Florida* and *De deo Socratis* really so fundamental that they allow us to place them in two opposite groups? Clear-cut categorisations are difficult for such a versatile figure as Apuleius, and the labels which modern scholars use to characterise him simply fail to do justice to the complex character of his œuvre.

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5 Harrison (2000), 38.

6 Thus, e. g., Gersh (1986), 217. The same division is adopted in the Budé-editions. Cf. also Dillon (1977), 309, and Hijmans (1987) Hijmans (1994). Since the authenticity of *Peri Hermeneias* is far from certain [good discussions can be found in Londey – Johanson (1987), 11–19 and Hijmans (1987), 408–11), I prefer to omit the work from the following discussion. Some doubts have also been raised about the authenticity of *De Platone* and *De mundo*, but most scholars consider them genuine. An extra text has now been added to the likely list of Apuleius' works, which has been called an *Epitome* among scholars prior to the publication of the text by Stover (2016). It consists primarily of summaries of thirteen Platonic works, some very brief even relative to length (*Euthyphro, Parm., Critias*) and some, fuller (*Ep.*, *Crito*, *Rep.*, *Tim.*). Stover regards the work, contained in manuscript R of Apuleius, as a genuine Apuleian work, perhaps best described as a *compendiosa expositio*. He offers reasons for supposing it to be the lost third book of the *De Platone*. The beginning is missing, so it is possible, but perhaps unlikely, that other dialogues were included; *Epinomis* is treated as the thirteenth book of the *Laws*. The fuller summaries in particular have important consequences for the way that the author interpreted Plato, and the only section that gives direct authorial comment divides the works between those illustrating Socratic philosophy, for which the author has the greatest respect, those following the Eleatic and Pythagorean tradition, and the *Laws-Epinomis* in which the main speaker is said to represent Plato himself; no doubt the *Epistles* that follow the thirteen-book *Laws* were also supposed to represent Plato's position, and they too may have consisted of the traditional thirteen.

Yet it would be equally unjustified to rashly reject such labels altogether, for however over-simplified these labels may be, they are *not* anachronistic. They rather presuppose and take over a straightforward opposition between sophist and philosopher that was also common in antiquity. Alcinous, for instance, clearly distinguishes in his *Didaskalikos* between the philosopher and the sophist (35, 189.12–18 W.). If he one day went to the theatre in order to listen to Apuleius' virtuoso speeches, he would in all likelihood have concluded that he had been listening to a sophist rather than a philosopher, and many among the audience would have agreed with him. Others, however, would be prepared to consider Apuleius an eloquent philosopher, one of these people who, in Philostratus' words, "ranked as sophists although they pursued philosophy" (*VS*, Praef. 479). Both these evaluations would rest on good arguments, and in a certain sense, both would be valid. The implication is that all of the above listed quotations contain a general assessment of Apuleius that is correct and one-sided at the same time.

Progress can be made by examining how Apuleius understands himself and fortunately enough, there can be little doubt about that. In his entire œuvre, time and again, he claims to be a *philosophus Platonicus* (*Apol.* 10.6; cf. 11.5; 41.7; 65.8; *DDS* 3.125) and to belong to the *Platonica familia* (*Apol.* 64.3; cf. 22.7 and 39.1; *Flor.* 15.26), situating himself in the tradition of Socrates (*Flor.* 2.1: *maior meus Socrates*), Plato, and the later Platonic school. We may add that Augustine later appreciated him as one of the most distinguished Platonists (*Ciu. Dei* 8.12). However, it would be quite naïve to accept Apuleius' self-presentation without questioning. Every passage in which he underlines his capacity of Platonic philosopher should be understood in its rhetorical context. It is no coincidence that the most explicit and emphatic passages can be found in the *Florida* and the *Apology*. The latter work is presented by Apuleius as a defence of both himself and philosophy (3.5), and this should be understood as a clever strategy designed to undermine the charge of magic practices. In other words, Apuleius' pointed self-definition as a *philosophus Platonicus* helps him a great deal in denying that he is a magician,[7] which may make us wonder whether all this is more than a Platonism *pour le besoin de la cause*. In the *Florida*, the references to Plato's philosophy always contribute to the image building of Apuleius, adding to his authority and credibility as a speaker. In all of these cases, then, we meet the carefully constructed rhetorical *persona* of Apuleius, not the real, historical Apuleius himself.[8]

7 Cf. Rives (2008).

8 Cf. Hunink (2004a); cf. Hijmans (1994), 1725.

Nevertheless, all this emphasis on Platonism is in all likelihood more than a façade. Apuleius' extant works in fact show that it also has a *fundamentum in re*. We can argue about the depth of Apuleius' Platonic thinking, but most scholars would allow that he was sincere in considering himself to be a *philosophus Platonicus* and that he really wanted to be a Platonist.[9] By giving him this label, rather than that of sophist, we thus in any case seem to do more justice to his own self-definition.

The question remains, however, what this label of *philosophus Platonicus* really meant for Apuleius. Here, we should have a closer look at Apuleius' understanding of philosophy itself. The key passage is to be found in *Flor.* 7.9–10:

> I wish that a similar kind of edict concerning philosophy were in force: that no one should attempt its likeness without reason; that a few good exponents of proven and encyclopaedic learning (*eruditi*) should survey the field of philosophy; and that the rude, vulgar, unskilled people who are only philosophers because they wear cloaks should not imitate them, nor should they debase the disciplinary rule invented as much for speaking well as for living well (*disciplinam regale tam ad bene dicendum quam ad bene vivendum repertam*) by speaking badly and living in the same way. (trans.) Hilton

Apuleius' conception of philosophy thus contains three components: the true philosopher is erudite, lives the good life, and proves to be an excellent speaker.[10] This is quite a striking definition, which strongly differs from what we find in Alcinous. The traditional attention of the philosopher to the knowledge of intelligible being and truth (*Did.* 1, 152.8–12; cf. 35, 189.15–16) is here translated in terms of erudition, which covers a domain that is much broader than the technical discussions of the school, and especially striking is the emphasis on the importance of eloquence. Of course, the broader context of the passage should be taken into account in this case as well. As this characterisation of true philosophy is to be found in the *Florida*, we may presume that it perfectly suits Apuleius' own activity as an erudite and virtuoso speaker.[11] Yet basically the same definition returns near the beginning of *De Platone* (1.4.189), where Apuleius points to Plato's philosophical system of living, understanding and speaking (*vivendique et intellegendi ac loquendi rationem*). In this passage, the trichotomy is connected with the traditional triad ethics – physics – logic,

9 See now Fletcher (2014).

10 Cf. Roskam (2004) and (2005), 379–81.

11 One may compare *Flor.* 18.40 (*doctrina et eloquentia et benivolentia*).

which is thus subtly reoriented, but the striking parallel shows that the same understanding of philosophy proves valid beyond the specific contexts and orientations of different works.

As we said, this general conception of philosophy strongly differs from that of an Alcinous or a Proclus. In fact, it does away with the traditional opposition between philosophy and rhetoric. The implication of such a view is that a work such as the *Florida* is as relevant for Apuleius' activity as a Platonic philosopher as *De Platone*.[12] This, of course, is a radical conclusion, and we may presume that many specialists of ancient philosophy would hesitate to accept it. Their hesitation reflects the point of view of the so-called "professional" philosophers such as the Neoplatonic *diadochoi*. In this chapter, I prefer to side with the *persona* of Apuleius himself and take the consequences of his own understanding of philosophy. I confine myself to a general survey and leave detailed analyses of specific passages to others.

II A Quick Look at the Broad Outlines of Apuleius' Platonism

We have seen that Apuleius' general understanding of philosophy rests on three pillars. In what follows, I discuss all of them in turn.

1) *Eruditio*

The true philosopher has a thorough knowledge of the world in all its different facets. The general outlines of Apuleius' worldview can be found in *De mundo* and *De Platone*. The former work is a free adaptation of the Peripatetic treatise Περὶ κόσμου. The first part contains a discussion of the composition of the universe (including all kinds of meteorological phenomena) (1.289–23.341). The second part deals with the supreme god and his providential working in the world (24.341–38.374). Quite often, Apuleius subtly adapts the text of his Greek original in order to reconcile it with his own philosophical convictions,[13] but *De mundo* is also interesting because it throws light on an essential aspect of what Apuleius understands by the philosopher's *eruditio*. He is able to explain the different components of his world, including its providential order.

De Platone is a perfect complement to *De mundo*. In this work, Apuleius sketches the fundamental doctrines of his Platonic philosophy. The first book focuses on physics, the second one on ethics, and both are characterised by a

12 Cf. Hijmans (1994), 1731, and Hilton (2006) on *Flor.* 23.

13 This aspect of *De mundo* has often been studied; see, e. g., Regen (1971); Hijmans (1987), 399–403; Harrison (2000), 187–95.

clear preference for triadic schemata.[14] After a brief discussion of Plato's life, Apuleius begins with the well-known *Dreiprinzipienlehre*, introducing God, matter and the Ideas as the fundamental principles of the world (1.5.190–1.6.193). He then distinguishes between two essences (one only conceived by thinking, the other by sense perception; 1.6.192–194) and discusses the formation of the elements and the world (1.7.194–8.198), touching upon the highly controversial issue of the origin of the world and the correct interpretation of the *Timaeus* (1.8.198). Apuleius here tries to reconcile both the literal and the symbolic interpretation. Then follow discussions of the world-soul (1.9.199–200), time (10.201–203) and an interesting chapter on providence, where Apuleius mentions the well-known Middle-Platonist doctrine of threefold providence.[15] The last chapters of book 1 deal with the senses, the parts of the body and health (1.14.209–18.218), representing in a nutshell the doctrines of the *Timaeus*.

This is Apuleius' basic philosophical outlook that also, and quite consistently, informs his other works. In *De deo Socratis*, one aspect of it, viz. demonology, is elaborated quite systematically and at great length. The work shows a strongly hierarchical world of gods, with on top the supreme god,[16] at the lower level the celestial gods (who fall in two classes: the visible and the invisible ones), and still lower the demons, who occupy an intermediary position between gods and men. Apuleius here relies heavily on a key passage from Plato's *Symposium* (202e–203a), but also uses other Platonic dialogues (such as the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus*) and tries to relate his Platonic views to the Latin world of *Genii*, *Lemures* and *Larvae*.

The above picture has made it clear that *eruditio* is for Apuleius primarily Platonic erudition, yet it is more than that. For Apuleius, Aristotle and the Peripatetics also belong to the Platonic tradition,[17] and he seems to have been

14 Gersh (1986), 228.

15 The doctrine also appears in Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato* 572F–574D and Nemesius, *de Nat. hom.* 43, p. 125.21–126.12 Morani; cf. Calcidius, *comm.* 146; recent discussions include Dillon (1977), 324–26; Gersh (1986), 280–85; Williams (1992) (who points to the relevance of Gnostic works such as the *Apocryphon of John* and *On the Origin of the World*); Sharples (2003).

16 Apuleius' supreme god, *summus* and *exsuperantissimus*, is both transcendent and immanent. The term *exsuperantissimus* has been much discussed. It is often understood as a reference to the cult of Ba'al Samîn, e. g. Beaujeu (1983), 399; Gersh (1986), 271–2; Hijmans (1987), 439; *contra* Méthy (1999). That Apuleius' conception of the highest god has some interesting connections with gnostic texts and magic papyri has been argued by van den Broek (1982).

17 *Apol.* 36.3: *maiores meos, Aristotelen dico et Theophrastum et Eudemum et Lyconem ceterosque Platonis minores.*

particularly interested in the genre of *Natural Questions*, an interest which he shares with other Middle-Platonists.[18] If we may believe what he claims in his *Apology* (36.6; cf. 41.7), he also wants to emulate Aristotle's distinguished example and contribute to this rich tradition with his own research. Moreover, Apuleius did not hesitate to look beyond his own philosophical school[19] and even beyond the borders of philosophy. His works are full of quotations from Vergil, Homer, drama, and so on: this is παιδεία in the broad sense of the word.[20] In this respect, Apuleius can best be compared with authors such as Plutarch and Favorinus. These are broad-minded Platonists that refuse to coop themselves up in their own school but deal with the entire tradition of transmitted knowledge. They develop a thinking that is, in a sense, much more dynamic than that of Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* or that of later Neoplatonist commentators. Among such scholastic circles, it presumably attracted more negative labels, but at least, they were not the men who, as Callicles has it (*Grg.* 485d), were solving their syllogisms in some corner. Apuleius adopted a Platonism *sui generis*, no doubt, but which Platonist did not?

At this point, I would very briefly mention the many interpretative problems raised by the *Metamorphoses*, a work as elusive as Apuleius himself. Several scholars only find light-hearted entertainment in the novel, whereas others discover a serious philosophical message in it.[21] Both interpretations are sensible, and in fact, the *Metamorphoses* is a multi-layered text. That entertainment is of paramount importance appears from the very outset of the work (cf. 1.1: *lector intende: laetaberis*), but it can hardly be denied that the novel overflows with elements that have a philosophical relevance. Even the names of several characters ring a bell.[22] The lengthy tale of Amor and Psyche can be read as an allegory of the human soul and the dynamics of Platonic Eros, and the culminating Isis book in which Lucius, the *asinus philosophans* (10.33) finally

18 As appears from Plutarch's *Natural Questions*. On Taurus, see Aulus Gellius, 19.6.2.

19 For instance, he often made use of Lucretius; see on this Hijmans (1987), 426–7; Lucarini (1999); Harrison (2000), 140, 184–5 and 205.

20 Cf. May (2010), 187: "It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that for Apuleius, Platonic philosophy and display of learning are one and the same."

21 A thorough discussion of this topic would require a chapter on its own. For a brief survey of relevant literature, see Schlam and Finkelpearl (2000) (esp. 99–117 on philosophic readings of the *Metamorphoses*).

22 Such as Socrates (*Met.* 1.5–19) or Thrasyllus (8.8). For Socrates see Kirichenko (2008), 93–95, for Thrasyllus see Repath (2000). The connection of Lucius with Plutarch (1.2) has been much discussed; see, e. g., Hunink (2004b), 257–60; Keulen (2004); Kirichenko (2008), 95–96.

regains his human shape, appears to introduce a new, higher perspective that seems to go beyond mere entertainment. To ignore all of this or regard it as mere *Hineininterpretierung* is too reductionist. The whole novel shows a creative reception of Platonic philosophy, fully adapted to the opportunities of the literary genre. It may well be regarded as a brilliant combination of σπουδή and γέλοιον.[23] Every reader (both ancient and modern) ends up with his own interpretation, but even those who are sensitive to the philosophical relevance of many motifs, stories and sayings, will enjoy a refined intellectual pleasure.

2) *Ad bene vivendum*

That philosophy contributes to the good life is a commonplace in the whole of ancient thinking. In the scholarly literature on Apuleius' philosophy, however, it is a *topos* that is somewhat understudied, for scholars usually focus on Apuleius' theoretical views of God and the world. According to Gersh, for instance, "his interpretation of Plato is of a special kind in which the metaphysical and especially religious elements are greatly emphasized".[24] This assessment, however, is to a certain extent based on Gersh's own selection of "relevant" material. It is striking indeed that the second book of *De Platone* receives almost no attention.

In the first sentences of *De Platone* 2, Apuleius immediately clarifies the importance of his treatment of ethics: moral philosophy shows the road towards happiness (2.1.219). All the theoretical discussions that follow thus have a practical purpose. This book is less carefully structured than the first one, and Apuleius several times returns to the same themes, the most important of which are different classifications of the good (2.1.220–2.222; 2.10.235), rhetoric and politics (2.8.231–9.234; 2.24.255–28.263), and especially a trichotomy between the perfect sage, the utterly wicked man, and the great majority of *medie morati* (2.3.222–7.230; 2.15.240–22.252). Apuleius often adopts a didactic and protreptic tone in *De Platone* 2, implicitly urging his reader to heed the consequences of what he reads.

The same tone can be found at the end of *De deo Socratis*. Several scholars have noted that the last section of this work "is rather different from the material which has preceded it",[25] but that does not mean of course that it should be regarded as a less relevant appendix. On the contrary, it is of vital importance, as it reflects the same dynamics of a philosophy that is "invented for living well". In his *Florida*, Apuleius explicitly mentions the didactic function

23 Zimmerman (2008).

24 Gersh (1986), 221.

25 Thus Harrison (2000), 165; cf. Beaujeu (1973), 244 with note 3; Sandy (1997), 208.

of philosophy (5.2; cf. 17.18–19),[26] and this throws light on the philosophical relevance of the work. For Apuleius, these are not merely pieces of rhetorical bravado but philosophical lessons expressed in polished language. If we want to take seriously Apuleius' own perspective, the *Florida* should be considered as part and parcel of a philosophical project in which the *philosophus Platonicus* assumes his responsibility and acts as the educator of his fellow citizens. In *Flor.* 9.33, he tells his audience that philosophy taught him to prefer the public interest to his own good. Some may regard this as nothing more than the conceited self-display of a virtuoso sophist. In my view, there are equally good reasons to argue that Apuleius was, as a Platonist, indeed concerned about his usefulness for the broader community. His public speeches are the direct consequence of his understanding of Platonic philosophy, and vice versa. Apuleius is remarkably consistent on this point, and this, in antiquity, is one of the most important criteria for being a sincere philosopher.[27]

3) *Ad bene dicendum*

As yet, this aspect of Apuleius' philosophical thinking has received almost no attention, which is, perhaps, not so surprising, as it is usually connected to his capacity of orator. This is a telling example of how our own clear-cut labelling entails some blind spots in contemporary research. For Apuleius undeniably claims that it is *philosophy* (and, we should insist, not rhetoric) that is invented for speaking well (*Flor.* 7.10). This raises a lot of fascinating questions.

As our starting point, we may take Apuleius' distinction between two kinds of rhetoric in *De Platone* 2.8.231:

> [O]ne is the discipline of contemplating good, which adheres to justice and is suitable and proper to the mode of life of one who wishes to seem concerned, a *politicus*, the other is a science of flattery captivating by verisimilitude, a hotch-potch using no rational system. (trans.) M. O'Brien.

Apuleius thus makes some room for a good rhetoric, defined as a *disciplina contemplatrix bonorum*. Much can be said about this interesting passage,[28] but I here confine myself to one brief comment: it apparently suggests that

26 Cf. Sandy (1997), 154–6 and 185.

27 See, e. g., Mansfeld (1994), 177–91 and Roskam (2005), 320–35.

28 It would be interesting to examine, for instance, the relation between Apuleius' position and the later Platonist tradition of *Gorgias*-interpretation (cf. Olympiodorus' commentary on this dialogue); we may presume indeed that Plato's *Gorgias* appealed to Apuleius when understood in this way.

the *bene* in the phrase *bene dicendum* does not so much concern the style as the content of the speech. This is further confirmed by two other passages in *De Platone*, where Apuleius distinguishes between the intelligible realm, that can be expressed in words that are full of steady reasoning and credibility, and the sensible world that can only be discussed through inconsistent conjectures (1.6.194 and 1.9.200).[29] Apuleius' rhetoric is presumably of the good kind, as it deals with topics that indeed adhere to justice and are fitting for the public-spirited philosopher. If that is true, the *Florida* and *De deo Socratis* further illustrate what Apuleius here understands by good rhetoric.[30]

However, the term *bene* in *bene dicendum* should also be understood in a literary way. That the good stile contributes to the prestige of the philosopher's doctrine appears from the example of Plato himself. He indeed enhanced the *dignitas* of Socrates' views by the charm and grandeur of his words (*venustate et maiestate verborum*, a phrase which unambiguously points to stylistic qualities). If we take this seriously, an important part of our research on Apuleius' Platonism should consist of … stylistic studies. This raises several questions that cannot be dealt with here but that would repay further study:

(1) To what extent Apuleius modifies an important part of Platonic reception of his day? Philosophers such as Plutarch (*De prof. in virt.* 79D) and Taurus (Aulus Gellius, 1.9.10 and 17.20.5–6) explicitly blame those people who only read Plato because of the purity of his style. For them, Plato's pure Attic may be appreciated because it yields additional pleasure, but it is not essential at all. Apuleius' position is different: he agrees that stylistic matters should not be the reader's sole concern, yet they are more than an incidental detail.
(2) To what extent Apuleius' view of a good rhetoric has influenced his method of translation in *De mundo*, and to what extent it throws light on his own rhetoric in the *Apologia*, as opposed to the rusticity of his opponents (*Apol.* 4.2; 9.1; 10.6; 33.6–7; 66.6)?
(3) Apuleius is well-known for his idiosyncratic affected and ornate style and his recherché vocabulary. The question of how this style can be connected with his philosophical views is, from an Apuleian perspective, a legitimate one. Are archaism and *obscuritas* used in order to add to the prestige of Apuleius' philosophy – given that Plato himself had a reputation for obscurity, even for deliberate obscurity;

29 See O'Brien (1991), 41–42.
30 *Contra* O'Brien (1991), 43.

cf. Diogenes Laertius 3,63 –, and/or does it have other argumentative values?

(4) Finally, how does one explain the strikingly different style of *De Platone* and *De mundo*? Is this Apuleius' attempt to opt for a middle position, combining the traditional, arid style of handbooks that are only concerned about facts and doctrines with some moderate stylistic embellishment (including, perhaps, the *cursus mixtus*)? And can this be related to later distinctions regarding Plato's style (cf. *Proleg.* 17.1–18, where different styles are distinguished and related to different types of works)?

All these are difficult questions, but they deserve further attention within the context of broader studies of Apuleius' Platonism.

III The Plato of Apuleius' Platonism

I conclude with a few observations on Apuleius' view of Plato. Plato's outstanding qualities are illustrated in a beautiful anecdote about Socrates' dream, told at the beginning of *De Platone*. Socrates once dreamed how the young of a swan flew from Cupid's altar in the Academy and came to sit on his knees. Later, the swan flew to heaven while charming gods and men with his musical song. When Socrates later told his dream to his friends, Plato's father Ariston happened to be present, wanting to introduce his son to Socrates. As soon as the latter saw the boy and discovered his deepest talents from his face, he said: "this was Cupid's swan from the Academy" (1.1.182–183).

This charming anecdote appears in the *Life of Plato* which opens *De Platone* 1. For Dillon, this life is "of no interest from a philosophical standpoint",[31] but such a judgement once again rests on our own standards rather than on those of Apuleius. For the ancients, the concrete life of the philosopher precisely provides the litmus test of the respectability of his tenets. It is not for nothing that the Neoplatonists enthusiastically sang the praises of their predecessors and teachers.[32] Seen from this perspective, Apuleius' *Life of Plato* rather belongs to the most important parts of *De Platone*.[33]

31 Dillon (1977), 311.

32 As Marinus did in his *Life of Proclus*, or Damascius in the *Life of Isidorus*; and Proclus reveres Syrianus in his major commentaries.

33 Furthermore, parallels can be established between the *Life of Plato* and Apuleius' own life; Hijmans (1987), 434–5.

The lens through which Apuleius looks at Plato's life is particularly revealing. It is striking that the three basic components of erudition, moral virtue and eloquence that constitute Apuleius' understanding of philosophy, reappear in the *Life of Plato* and are connected with Plato in other works as well. Plato surpassed Socrates' other pupils in mental powers and learning (*De Plat.* 1.2.185) and elaborated "divine" and convincing tenets (*DDS* 16.155; cf. *Apol.* 43.2; 49.1–2; 51.1–2). He likewise surpassed the virtues of the heroes (*De Plat.* 1.2.183; cf. *DDS* 22.169) and he time and again showed his marvellous literary talents and "celestial" eloquence (*De Plat.* 1.2.185; 1.3.188; *DDS* 3.124; *Apol.* 49.1). Significantly enough, Apuleius even claims that Demosthenes, the expert par excellence in the art of speaking (*primarium dicendi artificem*), derived his eloquence from Plato (*Apol.* 15.8–9). We may conclude, then, that Apuleius' Plato is the Plato of his own conception of philosophy.

This does not mean, however, that this Plato is an entirely artificial creation. For there can be little doubt that Apuleius had a sound knowledge of Plato's *Dialogues*. He translated the *Phaedo* (fr. 9–10 Beaujeu) and was thoroughly familiar with the *Timaeus*, which informs many large sections from *De Platone* and which is also strategically used in other works (e. g. for an erudite explanation of epilepsy in *Apol.* 49.1–50.7). The *Symposium* is an important subtext of both *De deo Socratis* and the *Metamorphoses*, whereas the novel is also enriched by subtle allusions to the *Phaedrus*.[34] The political doctrines mentioned in *De Platone* can easily be traced back to the *Republic*[35] and the *Laws*, and several other Platonic *Dialogues* are explicitly mentioned or used by Apuleius. Often, Apuleius refers to well-known general doctrines, but occasionally, he also focuses on details. A case in point is his argument that Socrates did not hear a common, human voice when he received a message from his δαιμόνιον, since he claimed to hear not just a voice but "a certain kind of voice" (*DDS* 20.165–166). The reference is obviously to Plato's phrase τινα φωνήν in the *Phaedrus* (242c1–2). Finally, the much-discussed influence of Plato's *Apology* on Apuleius' *Apologia* deserves special mention.[36] Since many parallels have been established between the two works, and even more could be added, there can be little doubt that Apuleius' indeed derives inspiration of Plato's *Apology* for the composition of his own defence. The fact that there can also be found significant differences

34 See Trapp (2001) and Kirichenko (2008), 97–106 for the influence of Plato's *Phaedrus* on Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, and Dowden (2006) for that of *Symp.*

35 That Apuleius was familiar with subtle discussions of Plato's thinking of justice has been shown by Donini (1999).

36 See, e. g., Schindel (2000); Riess (2008a), 53–60.

between both works[37] need not undermine this conclusion. In fact, Apuleius neither wants nor is able to replay Socrates' trial without modification. He obviously had to take the concrete circumstances into account, and within this new context, he creatively adapted the traditional material to his own needs. This, if anything, shows Apuleius' intimate knowledge of Plato's works.

Apuleius' Plato, then, is both the Plato of his own conception of philosophy and (at least to a certain extent) the Plato of the *Dialogues*. But there is still a third aspect: Apuleius' Plato is also the Plato of the later philosophical schools. This appears especially from *De Platone*, where Apuleius introduces his reader to a systematized Plato. On the basis of a few key passages from Plato's *Dialogues*, a systematic doctrine is constructed and formalised into doxographic lists and classifications. What we get here is a survey of Plato's thinking from which all inconsistencies and gaps have been removed, and which integrates also the doctrines and technical terminology of other philosophical schools. Especially the Peripatetic tradition is a goldmine of useful material, but Stoic philosophy also makes its influence felt (e. g. in Apuleius' description of the sage in *De Platone* 2.20.247–22.252). Now and then, Apuleius' presentation contains brief doxographic tenets that derive their principal relevance from later philosophical debates. To confine myself to one example, in *De Platone* 2.13.239, Apuleius briefly states that love for one's children is natural. This may indeed be regarded as Plato's conviction (cf. *Smp.* 208b), but it only became a real issue when Epicurus denied that parental love for children is natural. Epicurus' position gave rise to a philosophical debate, traces of which can be found in Plutarch (*De amore prolis*; cf. *Quaest. conv.* 634E), Epictetus (1.23.3) and, for the Epicureans, Demetrius Laco (*PHerc.* 1012 col. 66,5–68,10). Plato did not have to bother about this, but Apuleius' Plato had.

If Apuleius' Plato, then, is also the Plato of the schools, the question remains whether we can be more precise about which school is meant here. Scholarly studies of Apuleius' Platonism were for a long time influenced by the hypothesis of the so-called "School of Gaius". The many striking similarities between Apuleius' *De Platone* and the *Didaskalikos* were the starting point of this hypothesis. The latter work was then generally ascribed to Albinus, the pupil of Gaius. This resulted in the hypothesis that both Albinus and Apuleius expressed the views of their teacher Gaius, which allowed scholars to reconstruct the latter's philosophy at least to a certain extent.[38] The first scholar who systematically

37 See esp. Riess (2008a), 60–67; Puccini-Delbey (2010).

38 The hypothesis of the "School of Gaius" was first proposed by Sinko (1905), who relied on the identification of Alcinous with Albinus, proposed by Freudenthal (1879), 277–302.

undermined the theory was Dillon, who especially emphasised the many significant differences between Apuleius' *De Platone* and the *Didaskalikos*, while explaining the parallels between the two works as the common products of the rich philosophical tradition.[39] A new step in the discussion was the groundbreaking study of Göransson.[40] He demonstrated that *De Platone* 1 is in many aspects radically different from the *Didaskalikos*, whereas *De Platone* 2 shows both remarkable correspondences and clear differences. Göransson tried to explain these findings by postulating a rather sophisticated process of composition, in which Apuleius would have combined different sources. The main problem with this hypothesis is in my view its presupposition that *everything* we read in *De Platone* can be traced back to earlier sources. The possibility that Apuleius may have contributed material himself is insufficiently considered.

Yet several scholars have meanwhile called attention to Apuleius' personal contributions, and correctly so. Finamore, for instance, has shown how Apuleius' thinking about the visible gods rests on a creative attempt to solve interpretative difficulties concerning the *Phaedrus*,[41] and Barra has argued that Apuleius develops a personal stance on the problem of evil.[42] Such analyses, which reveal the occasional subtlety of Apuleius' thinking, show the direction for future work. The dry classifications sometimes rest on vital thinking, and there can be little doubt that Apuleius was at least capable of developing innovative insights. He knew the Platonic tradition very well and was perfectly able to go beyond a slavish and inconsiderate reproduction of his sources.[43]

As far as *De Platone* is concerned, this means that we can choose between (at least) two alternatives. Perhaps Apuleius did in *De Platone* what Alcinous did, according to Tarrant, in his *Didaskalikos*: taking over an earlier handbook and updating "it considerably so that it conformed broadly with the Platonist world of the later second century AD."[44] Such a view seems less sophisticated than Göransson's hypothesis, but it is more plausible in that it probably reflects the usual way of working for ancient authors. Plutarch, for instance, in

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Among the many eminent specialists who accepted Sinko's hypothesis are Moreschini (1978), 55–61 and Hijmans (1987), 453; cf. also Gersh (1986), 225 ("a possible although scarcely proven hypothesis").

39 Dillon (1977), 311–38.

40 Göransson (1995).

41 Finamore (2006), 40–42.

42 Barra (1972). See also Gersh (1986), 287–90 (on the problematic passage about the Ideas in *De Platone* 1.5.190) and 328.

43 One may recall Apuleius' explicit ambition to make innovative contributions in the field of Προβλήματα literature (*Apol.* 36.6; cf. also 40.5 and 41.7).

44 Tarrant (2007), 461–2; cf. Harrison (2000), 197.

all likelihood used one main source when writing a *Life*, adding material from other secondary sources and from his own ready knowledge.[45] Damascius used the commentaries of Proclus as the principal source for his own commentaries, probably having the text of Plato's *Dialogues* as a secondary source on his desk.[46] Examples could be multiplied. This is how ancient authors worked, and their method can be explained by the material condition of their sources. A papyrus scroll was not so easy to handle, which made it difficult to continuously switch from one source to the next. We may presume accordingly that Apuleius likewise followed one principal source, but used it freely as a point of departure for his own, personal account. This is what he did in *De mundo*, and he may have done basically the same in *De Platone*, although the amount of personal input may there have been much greater.

There is, however, also a second possibility. We know that Apuleius studied in Athens (*Flor.* 18.15 and 42; cf. 15.26; 20.4). It is reasonable to presume that he not only read Plato's *Dialogues* but also attended an introductory course of Plato's philosophy similar to what he provides himself in *De Platone*. If that is indeed true, we may regard *De Platone* as a personal later reworking of the course notes he took ἀπὸ φωνῆς.[47] This would explain the occasional similarities to the *Didaskalikos*: both in fact could be traced back to the same general educational framework and sometimes reflect the same traditional formulas and definitions that were used in the teaching of the Platonic schools. At the same time, this hypothesis would explain the many differences between the *Didaskalikos* and *De Platone*. Apuleius would then have elaborated his student notes at a later stage, on the basis of his own philosophical convictions and in line with his ideal of *bene dicendi*. Both hypotheses leave ample room for Apuleius' own creative contribution rather than reducing the *philosophus Platonicus* to his sources.

We began our chapter with the figure of a superficial dilettante and have ended up with a sophisticated, erudite and eloquent Platonist. Every reader should decide for himself which alternative he prefers. I would ultimately side with Apuleius (and Augustine) and honour him as a *philosophus Platonicus* (*sui generis*). Many of the outstanding specialists of Apuleius may disagree and continue to regard him primarily as a sophist or orator. If they are right, I would readily adapt Cicero's celebrated dictum (*Tusc. Disp.* 1,39) and conclude that I prefer to go astray with Apuleius rather than hold true views with his opponents.

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45 The most illustrative example is his *Life of Coriolanus*, based on Dionysius of Halicarnassus; cf. Russell (1963). On the Roman *Lives*, see esp. the seminal article of Pelling (1979).

46 See, e. g., Van Riel (2008), clxxvii–clxxix on Damascius' *in Phlb*.

47 Cf. Sandy (1997), 4 and 215.

CHAPTER 10

Alcinous' Reception of Plato

*Carl S. O'Brien**

I Introduction

It is clear now that the author of the *Didaskalikos* was indeed Alcinous, and the attribution to Albinus should be regarded as an error, resulting from a misguided conjecture by Freudenthal.[1] Alcinous' use of Plato can be characterized in terms of three central features. Firstly, his work is a handbook or instruction manual, although the level of instruction at certain points can seem relatively advanced. This suggests that it is not a handbook intended for beginners, but rather those who have already received some instruction in Platonism (possibly as a refresher manual for teachers of Platonism).[2] Secondly, Alcinous composed the *Didaskalikos* during the phase of Platonism identified as Middle Platonic and, as is typical of the period, Aristotelian and Stoic strands and terminology are combined with his Platonic heritage (although one must also note that many of the Aristotelian and Stoic elements which find their way into Middle Platonism often had a Platonic inspiration to begin with). In light of the lack of a distinctive "orthodox" Platonism, a range of opinions was tolerated and regarded as philosophically acceptable. This is undertaken from the dual perspective of modernizing or updating Plato, as well as claiming subsequent Aristotelian and Stoic advances for Plato himself; a good example is logic at *Did.* 5, which can be claimed to owe its origin to Platonic dialectic, although Plato himself never identified logic as a subdivision of philosophy. Thirdly, Plato is reduced by Alcinous to a series of *dogmata* or doctrines; he is stripped of his literary character and, although it is clear that Plato's philosophy permeates the *Didaskalikos*, we do not get the sense of Alcinous drawing upon any dialogue in its entirety. Passages from different works of Plato are

* I am deeply grateful to the Fritz Thyssen Foundation in Cologne for the award of a fellowship at Heidelberg under the supervision of Prof. Jens Halfwassen, which made this article possible. I would also like to thank Professor John Dillon (Trinity College, Dublin) for his insightful comments on an earlier draft.

1 On whom see Whittaker (1990), VII.

2 Dillon (1993), XIV.

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meshed together based on thematic lines.[3] It is not clear whether this interweaving was accomplished by Alcinous himself or an intermediate source, or indeed whether he draws upon several sources.

Alcinous' textual usage follows in the long tradition of systematizing Plato, which began with the Old Academy. A stylistic feature related to this grafting together of texts is Alcinous' employment of what Dillon terms "mirror" quotation:[4] frequently a pair of words used by Plato are simply inverted by Alcinous. Dillon suggests that Alcinous consciously adopts this technique in order to avoid directly quoting Plato. It must be noted that while Alcinous is sometimes inconsistent in his claims, this is something of which he himself was aware (outlined in his apology at the end of the work, 36.189.28–32), and in many cases, this inconsistency can be traced to Plato. A good example is Alcinous' treatment of the soul as tripartite (although he structures it in a bipartite manner) at chapter 17 and in chapters 23–24, as found in the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, and the representation of the soul as unitary at *Did.* 14.169.16–170.20 and *Did.* 25.177.21–32, based upon *Phd.* 80b where it is indicated that the soul is *monoeidēs* (uniform).

Individual passages from Plato's dialogues are rarely referred to directly (or indeed cited), though this does not apply to 27.180.41–28.181.41 where numerous citations and close references to the dialogues are made.[5] When Alcinous actually quotes passages, he sometimes only cites the opening of the relevant section, without mentioning which dialogue he is drawing from, as he does when referring to *Leg.* IV 715e (28.181.37–39) and *Phdr.* 248a (28.181.39–41). This reinforces Dillon's impression[6] that the *Didaskalikos* is intended for teachers of philosophy, rather than elementary students, since it presupposes considerable familiarity with the texts under discussion.

Alcinous, in general, does not comment on Plato as a philosopher, with the exception of *Did.* 6.159.45–160.3, where his praise seems somewhat overdone: "In general, the man [Plato] was supremely competent in, and a connoisseur of, the procedures of definition, division <and analysis>, all of which

3 See Dillon's Introduction (1993), XXIX to his Alcinous translation.

4 Dillon (1993), XXX.

5 Dillon (1993), 37 and Göransson (1995), 108 provide detailed accounts: References are made to *Euthd.* 281d–2 (27.181.5) and *Rep.* as a whole (27.181.8–9), *Leg.* I 631b is quoted at *Did.* 27.180.43–181.2 (the first book is mentioned explicitly), *Tht.* 176a–b at 28.181.22–26 and *Rep.* X 613a at 28.181.26–30, where the passage is explicitly noted to come from the final book, so Alcinous, or at least his source, was familiar with the original text of *Rep.* This contrasts with the use made of *Phd.* 82a–b (28.181.30–36), discussed below.

6 At Dillon (1993), XIV.

demonstrate particularly well the power of dialectic".[7] This, as well as the general Middle Platonist tendencies of the work, mean that we can regard Alcinous as a Platonist. This has sometimes been disputed on the basis of his statement at 9.163.25: "For most Platonists do not accept …" followed by his subsequent clarification (at 9.163.32–33) that "they justify the existence of forms…". This has been seen as evidence that he is distancing himself from members of a school to which he does not belong. There is no cogent reason to accept this view: Alcinous is making a more general point concerning the sort of Forms posited by the majority of Platonists.

Alcinous claims formal logic for Plato, limiting Aristotle's contribution to simply outlining a system of argumentation which had already been employed in Plato's dialogues. Diotima's speech at *Symp.* 210c–d illustrates the ascent from the sensibles to the intelligibles, *Phdr.* 245c exemplifies the ascent from demonstrated to indemonstrable propositions,[8] and Plato's use of the movement from an hypothesis to the non – hypothetical is to be found at *Rep*. VI 510b–511a.[9] Dillon has also noted that Alcinous claims a Platonic provenance for the Aristotelian categories, finding them all in the *Parmenides* (137b–150b): Quantity, Quality, Relation, Place, Time, Position, State, as well as Activity and Passivity.[10]

Alcinous relies heavily upon the *Timaeus* (or an epitome of it) for chapters 12–23. Other dialogues which are heavily drawn upon are the *Republic, Phaedrus, Laws* and *Theaetetus*, although it should be noted that Alcinous relies upon a wide spectrum of dialogues. It is of particular interest that Alcinous misreads Plato on at least three occasions.[11] This raises the obvious question of whether he had read the dialogues himself or was drawing upon other intermediate sources or handbooks which led to these mistakes. The first error, which has been noted by Dillon, is somewhat more understandable: Alcinous' demonology involves a misunderstanding of Plato's comments at *Tim.* 40a: Plato states that the heavens, air and water have their appropriate inhabitants, by which he means the heavenly gods, birds and fish. Alcinous follows the misreading of this section at *Ep*. 984d–985c to understand that there are

7 All translations of the *Didaskalikos* are taken from Dillon's (1993) translation, slightly adapted on occasion.

8 The context is that we can learn about divine and human souls by observation of how they act.

9 The argument is based upon the study of geometry. Cf. Dillon (1977), 277–8 & *Did.* 5. 157.11–42.

10 Dillon (1977), 279.

11 The third case is at *Did.* 8.162.31, where Alcinous misconstrues *Tim.* 50c–52d and is discussed below.

daemons in these three elements. "There are, furthermore, other divinities, the daemons, whom one could also term "created gods" present in each of the elements, some of them visible, others invisible, in ether, and fire, and air, and water, so that no part of the world should be without share in soul or in a living being superior to mortal nature. To their administration the whole sublunar and terrestrial sphere has been assigned" (15.171.15–20). While we now know that the *Epinomis* probably originated with Plato's literary secretary, Philip of Opus, clearly Alcinous was not aware of this, and consequently he accords it greater weight at this point than the *Timaeus*.

However, Alcinous is guilty of a much more serious error. At 28.181.30–36, Alcinous quotes (with some slight alterations) from *Phd.* 82b to demonstrate that the *telos* of life is likeness to God and stresses the importance of civic virtues in furthering this end. It seems at this point that Alcinous has encountered the citation via an intermediate source: in any case, he is unfamiliar with the original context, since immediately afterwards the *Phaedo* goes on to claim this as the basis for the reincarnation of civically-minded non-philosophers as eusocial insects such as bees, wasps or ants.[12] In other words, the *Phaedo* passage was intended negatively (a reference to the attainment of virtue via habituation rather than from philosophy), while Alcinous cites it with whole-hearted approval.

II Alcinous on World-Generation

The theology of chapter 10 is particularly worthy of comment: as has frequently been noted, this quite possibly contains Alcinous' most original contribution to Platonism.[13] The first God at chapter 10 (164.31–33) is described as "eternal (*aidios*), ineffable (*arrhētos*), self-perfect (*autotelēs*, that is, deficient in no respect), ever-perfect (*aeitelēs*, that is, always perfect) and all-perfect (*pantelēs*, that is, perfect in all respects)". It makes little sense to describe God as ineffable and then go on to provide a detailed account. Dillon makes the important point that the reference to God here and subsequently at 165.5 as "ineffable" (*arrhētos*) has proved misleading: the opening section of chapter 10 claims that it is difficult to describe him (much the same claim that Plato makes at *Tim.* 28c of the Demiurge – the point is that he is almost ineffable, but not quite).[14] Dillon's solution would

12 Alt (1993), 215–16 mentions this as a reason why the *Didaskalikos* should not be attributed to Albinus, since it would seem unlikely that a Platonist of his status would make such a basic error.

13 Dillon (1993), 100 and Alt (1996).

14 Dillon (1993), 101.

avoid this problem. However, this passage does indicate a major difficulty with Alcinous – in just a few short lines we have what appears to be an inconsistency, which – at best – is confusing in a work intended as a handbook and which a more talented philosophical mind or more conscientious writer would have taken pains to avoid. The use of the terms "self-perfect", "ever-perfect" and "all-perfect" are also of interest: they cannot be paralleled elsewhere and indeed cannot be common, since Alcinous is forced to explain what they mean (a somewhat surprising occurrence if the handbook was originally intended for teachers of philosophy, and if it was intended for students, there would seem to be even less point in introducing obscure terms). Dillon suggests a "high-flown or poetic source"[15] or a Hermetic tractate.[16] In any case, it confirms our picture of Alcinous as a writer consciously modernizing the language of Plato.

It is possible to see a major discrepancy in Alcinous' comments concerning the Demiurge in chapter 12 and his identification of the Demiurge with the first god (*ho prōtos theos*) at chapter 10 and 23.176.9, where he produces the immortal part of the soul, and it is the Young Gods of the *Timaeus* (simply identified by Alcinous as "the gods who fashion the mortal classes of being"), who fabricate the two lower parts of the soul. This is similar to the description of demiurgic activity at 12.167.8–15: "… it is necessary that the most beautiful of constructions, the world, should have been fashioned (*dedēmiourgêsthai*) by God looking to a Form of World, that being the model of our world, which is only copied from it, and it is by assimilation to it that it is fashioned by the Demiurge, who proceeds through a most admirable providence and administrative care to construct (*dēmiourgeîn*) the world, because 'he was good'" (*Tim.* 29e). Here again it appears that the highest god is the Demiurge, but if he is looking to a Form and copying from it, this implies that the Form is not contained within his own mind (so that Alcinous here does not follow the Middle Platonist notion of the Forms as no more than the thoughts of God). This also has a Platonic pedigree, since Plato never identified the Demiurge with the Form of the Good in the *Timaeus*.

This appears to conflict with the identification of the first God with the Good and the Beautiful. However, when we return to chapter 10, Alcinous makes an explicit declaration of the Forms as the thoughts of God at 10.164.27–31: "Since the primary intellect is the finest of things, it follows that the object of its intelligizing must also be supremely fine. But there is nothing finer than this intellect. *Therefore it must be everlastingly engaged in thinking of itself and its own thoughts, and this activity of it is Form*" (my italics). This first God is

15 Dillon (1993), 104.

16 Dillon (1977), 283.

referred to as the "Father through being the cause of all things and bestowing order on the heavenly Intellect and the soul of the world in accordance with himself and his own thoughts. By his own will he has filled all things with himself, rousing up the soul of the world and turning it towards himself, as being the cause of its intellect. It is this latter that, set in order by the Father, itself imposes order on all of nature in this world" (10.164.40–165.4). It is evident that the first God has an ordering role here and his title of Father evokes the Demiurge's title of "Maker and Father" at *Tim.* 28c. Since Numenius and Plotinus draw a distinction between these titles, one must ask whether this is the case with Alcinous.

It seems clear that, in chapter 10 at least, Alcinous draws a distinction between a first God (the term he uses) and what Donini terms a second God (not Alcinous' term, as Donini points out).[17] What I would argue is that we have a first God (the "Father") who can be identified with the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*, as well as the Good of *Republic* 6–7. As Dillon notes, Alcinous expressly denies (at 10.165.7–8, where God is neither good nor bad) that God is good by participation in goodness; part of Numenius' basis (at fr. 16 and fr. 21 Des Places) for distinguishing between a First God (Grandfather, Supreme Principle, Good) and a Second God (Demiurge, Father who participates in Good).[18] This confirms the picture of Alcinous' metaphysics in relation to other Middle Platonist writers: it tends to be less elaborate (in the sense of positing less ontological levels). The same feature is also observable in Alcinous' analysis of Fate, which, unlike Ps.-Plutarch *De Fato* does not postulate three levels of Fate, which are enclosed, one inside another. Since *Did.* 11.166.35–12.167.12 has been lifted almost verbatim from Arius Didymus *On the Doctrines of Plato,*[19] the most logical explanation for this discrepancy is that chapter 10 is a contribution of Alcinous himself, and when drawing upon Arius Didymus he did not consider it necessary to reconcile the two accounts.

The second entity is essentially a World-Soul (or as it is sometimes referred to by Alcinous, the Intellect of the World-Soul). The Father orders the Intellect of the World-Soul, which in turn ensures the orderly arrangement of the cosmos. There is no need to treat the World-Soul and its Intellect as separate entities:[20] the Father supplies the World-Soul with an intellect, allowing it to

17 Donini (1988), 118.

18 Dillon (1993), 106. A full discussion of Numenius' distinction between the First God and the Demiurge can be found at O'Brien (2015), 139–168.

19 *ap.* Eusebius *PE* 11.23.3–6 and Stobaeus *Anth.* 1.12.135.20–136.14.

20 A view also argued for by Dillon (1977), 284 and Alt (1996), 19.

instantiate the Forms in the material realm. This manoeuvre has Platonic provenance, since at *Leg.* X 897b it is the wise and good soul which has possession of heaven and earth.[21] Of particular note is the description of the World-Soul being roused up (*epegeiras*) by God (10.165.2; cf. 14.169.37). Since Alcinous elsewhere rejects the notion of temporal world-generation, one must interpret this rousing as a continuous process:[22] God continually supplies the World-Soul with an intellect and the possibility of order in accordance with the Forms.[23] That the (first) God is the Demiurge would seem clear from 15.171.20–25: "God is in fact himself the maker of the universe, and of the gods and daemons, and by his will this universe admits of no dissolution. The rest is ruled over by his children, who do everything that they do in accordance with his command and in imitation of him".[24]

III Alcinous' Psychology

Alcinous' treatment of the soul is a good example of his *modus operandi*, when it comes to integrating Plato's actual doctrines with subsequent reception. He follows the later Platonist bipartite division of the soul (into rational and irrational or "passionate" (*pathêtikon*) components),[25] instead of Plato's tripartite division, to which, however, he pays more than lip-service when at chapter 17, he locates the physical seat of each element of the soul within the body:

> When the gods had thus constructed man, and had bound into his body the soul which was to be its master, with good reason they established the ruling part of it in the head, where are to be found the starting-points of the marrow and of the nerves, and it is here that the

21 Cf. Dillon (1993), 106, Cherniss (1954), 27.

22 Though Alcinous at *Did.* 12–13 may convey the impression of temporal world-generation, this is explicitly rejected at *Did.* 14.169.32–34: "When he [Plato] says that the world is generated, one must not understand him to assert that there was a time when the world did not exist, but rather that the world is perpetually in a state of becoming".

23 Aetius I 7.8 equates (eternal) sleep with death and sees it as inappropriate for God. A sleeping World-Soul which suddenly wakes upon acquiring an intellect naturally raises the philosophical problems associated with temporal world-generation.

24 Alt (1996) notes the difficulty with attributing the production of the gods and daemons to Alcinous' second God. This would seem to be quite a feat for a mere World-Soul to accomplish.

25 24.176.36.

> losses of reason occur, occasioned by accidents. All round the head are stationed the senses, acting as bodyguards, as it were, for the ruling element. Here also are lodged the organs of reasoning, judgment and speculation, while the affective part of the soul they placed lower down, the spirited element round the heart and the appetitive round the abdomen and the parts about the navel, about which more will be said below. (17.173.5–15)

This is also a criticism of Chrysippus' belief in the soul's unity. Since the spirited elements of the soul can be demonstrated to be in conflict with reason[26] and the cupidinous element is also at times in conflict with reason,[27] Alcinous relies on the Platonist argument that contraries cannot co-exist in the same place at the same time to counter the Stoic position. However, even Alcinous' blend of a bipartite/tripartite structure can find some justification in Plato, when at *Tim.* 69e the immortal part of the soul is placed in the head and separated from its mortal counterpart by an isthmus (the neck); this mortal part is then further divided into two: a better and worse part, which is separated in the body by the midriff as a screen (*Tim.* 70a). While the claim that the rational element of the soul is located in the head is also made at *Tim.* 69d–e, Alcinous refers to it not as the *logistikon* (the Platonic term), but by using Stoic phrasing (*hēgemonikon*). It must be noted, though, that *hēgemonikon* is also used in other Middle Platonist sources and Alcinous' image of the senses serving as the *hēgemonikon*'s bodyguard is paralleled in a similar image employed by Philo of Alexandria at *De opif.* 139. Such Stoic elements in Alcinous' work have led even to the possible suggestion that he should be identified with the Stoic Alcinous,[28] but one might more profitably regard it as his means of modernizing Plato and drawing upon language that was increasingly regarded as common property. Alcinous' attribution of the Aristotelian term *hylē* (matter) to Plato is typical of Middle Platonism generally; in his discussion of the various terms which Plato applies to the Receptacle at *Tim.* 50c–52d, Alcinous includes the

26 Alcinous cites Euripides, *Medea* 1078–9 in support.

27 Here Euripides' *Chrysippus* fr. 841 is used as a supporting text. Cf. Dillon (1977), 291.

28 Whittaker (1990), IX–XI outlines various arguments which might be made in favour of such an identification. This Stoic Alcinous is mentioned by Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists*, p. 40 22–32 Kayser as being falsely credited in some quarters with a work more correctly attributed to Marcus of Byzantium. The main argument in favour of the identification is that both used the Homeric form "Alcinoos", rather than "Alcinous", although Whittaker is not in favour of such an identification based on non-Stoic elements in the *Didaskalikos*.

Aristotelian *hypokeimenon* (substratum).[29] This is further evidence that Alcinous' knowledge of Plato is heavily based upon secondary sources, rather than upon close reading of the dialogues themselves.

Similarly Alcinous updates *Tim.* 73d when he mentions that the head is the centre of the nervous system, a discovery made only in the third century BC by Herophilus. In Plato's account, the brain is connected to the rest of the body by means of the marrow (*muelos*). Whittaker has suggested that by *neûra*, Alcinous is referring to sinews, as is the case only a few lines above when he uses it in this manner no less than three times: the sinews are composed of bones and flesh, sinews bind the bones together and finally the limbs can bend thanks to the sinews.[30] Even though Alcinous has scientifically updated the *Timaeus*, one might note the greater sophistication of Plato's account: for example at *Tim.* 70d–e, he explains why the appetitive element of the soul has been banished to the stomach. (It can fulfill its function in peace and this separation allows the *logistikon* in the head the freedom to reason.) This level of analytical explanation is missing from Alcinous.

Alcinous then relies on the *Phaedrus* (the argument of self-motion, 245e) and the *Meno* (the argument of recollection, 81b–86e) to argue for the immortality of the soul. The passage on recollection (25.178.2–11) is worth quoting at length, since, as Dillon has noted, it is more extensive than Plato's own account:[31]

> Learning cannot arise in any other way than by remembering what was formerly known. If we had in fact to start from particulars in forming our conception of common qualities, how could we ever traverse the infinite series of particulars, or alternatively how could we form such a conception on the basis of a small number (for we could be deceived, as for instance if we came to the conclusion that only that which breathed was an animal); or how could concepts have the dominant role that they do have? So we derive our thoughts through recollection, on the basis of small sparks, under the stimulus of certain particular impressions remembering what we knew long ago, but suffered forgetfulness of at the time of our embodiment.

29 Whittaker (1987), 111 points out that *hypokeimenon* is used in Plut. *An. procr.*, so it was appropriated by the Middle Platonists; what is surprising is that Alcinous seems blissfully unaware that Plato did not use the term to refer to the Receptacle in *Tim.*

30 Whittaker (1990), 122 n.130, *Did.* 17.172.32–36.

31 Dillon (1977), 291.

Plato's account in the *Meno* is less explicit (86b6–7), while at *Tim.* 42b and 44b, it is simply hinted at in the description of the embodiment of the soul. One question left open by Plato in the *Phaedrus* myth with his image, not only of human souls consisting of a charioteer with two horses, but also the divine souls which they follow, was whether the souls of the gods contain any sort of equivalent to the spirited and appetitive elements of human souls. It is clear from *Phdr.* 246a and 247b that both divine horses are completely under the control of their charioteer, which is why they never "fall" to the material realm. (An issue that Alcinous never addresses is the relationship of the divine charioteer to his horses: at *Phdr.* 247e, he descends from the chariot to feed them ambrosia – since the human souls fall long before this stage is reached, there is no human equivalent. Alcinous never elaborates on what this aspect of the myth might mean). Alcinous represents the souls of the gods as tripartite: a cognitive (*gnōstikon*) element corresponding to the human rational element (*logistikon* represented by the charioteer), a "dispositional" (*parastatikon*) component corresponding to the spirited element (*thymoeides*), and an "appropriative" (*oikeiōtikon*) component, corresponding to appetite (*epithymētikon*) in humans.[32]

Alcinous also attempts to explain the grounds for the soul's descent, supplying four reasons:[33] 1) it allows the number of souls to remain constant, 2) the will of the gods, 3) intemperance (*akolasia*) and 4) the soul's love of the body (*philosōmatia*). This is typical of Alcinous' relationship with the Platonic tradition: he tends to supply a list of received arguments, although he also indicates the positions that he himself favours. The argument for a constant number of souls was later made by Salustios (ch. 23).[34] Alcinous does not comment on the problem inherent in this theory: since Alcinous, in line with the majority Middle Platonist view, sees the world as eternal, he consequently has no need to account for an initial descent. However, there must be some point at which the original number of souls was established and some significance inherent in this number, but Alcinous does not elaborate. It is not exactly clear what Alcinous means when he cites the will of the gods as a reason for the soul's descent: Dillon cites as a potential explanation the claim of Taurus' followers that the gods "desire to make themselves manifest through souls", though he notes that it is

32 *Did.* 25.178.39–45.

33 *Did.* 25.178.36–38.

34 It was also ridiculed by Gregory of Nyssa at *An et Res* PG 46 116C–117A when he ironically claims that there must be a peak in the number of souls falling in spring to account for all the animals born around that time.

uncertain whether this is Alcinous' point.[35] It could also be the case that Alcinous is distinguishing between the will of the gods and the free volition of the soul, as Alt suggests:[36] in this case we have two reasons relating to cosmic structure used to explain incarnation (a constant number of souls and divine will) and two reasons linked to the behaviour of the soul itself (intemperance and love of the body). The distinction between *akolasia* and *philosōmatia* is mainly that the intemperance of the soul is subject to censure, whereas love of the body is simply represented in terms of natural attraction, rather than as the result of the inherent wickedness of soul: "Body and soul have a kind of affinity (*oikeiotēs*) towards each other, like fire and asphalt" (25.178.38–39).[37] When in the course of its peregrinations the soul comes into close enough contact with body, it automatically enters it. While Plato does not express this situation in exactly these terms, both *akolasia* and *philosōmatia* can be seen as based on the inevitable descent of the soul at *Phdr.* 246b–c, though it is likely that the imagery of fire and asphalt is an original contribution on the part of Alcinous. This, however, runs contrary to the decision for a future life made by the souls in the underworld recounted by the Myth of Er, where incarnation occurs following the (imperfect) deliberation of the soul – though this could serve to justify intemperance, since souls are motivated to choose the lives that they initially believe are easiest.

Alcinous, however, never allows any room for the free choice of the soul in his account of incarnation. This is particularly noticeable since the next section of the *Didaskalikos* deals with fate.[38] However, Alcinous does describe the soul as without a master (*adespoton*),[39] echoing Plato's comments in relation to virtue at *Rep.* X 617e3, where God is not responsible for the types of lives chosen by individual souls.[40]

IV Conclusion

Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* can be understood as a relatively "timid" attempt to modernize Plato, in the sense that Plato's language is updated, but with the

35 Dillon (1977), 245 and 293. The account of Taurus' followers is found at Iamblichus, *de An.* (*ap.* Stob. I 378.25–379.6 Wasmuth).

36 Alt (1996), 150.

37 This precise combination of fire and asphalt appears to be without parallel: a *TLG* search did not uncover any comparable usage elsewhere.

38 Alt (1996), 152.

39 At *Did.* 26.179.10.

40 Alcinous blames our ignorance, and follows Plato's explanation of *akrasia* (31.185.1–6).

possible exception of chapter 10, there is little originality: Alcinous does not attempt any innovative harmonization or systematization of Plato with the later philosophical tradition. Given that this work is a handbook, this is only to be expected; more surprising is Alcinous' assumption of terminological knowledge and familiarity with the dialogues that lies beyond the level of an introductory student. Little or no attempt is made to resolve contradictions found in Plato or Alcinous' sources; a fact of which he himself was aware. This is illustrated by his apology at the conclusion of the work and his hope that it may fulfill a protreptic function and enable the reader to discover Plato's other doctrines. While Alcinous expresses his own views on occasion and sometimes takes a slightly independent line in terms of the organization of material (a good example is his somewhat unusual choice to discuss matter first in his theological account), many of his techniques are paralleled elsewhere in the Platonic tradition. Such features include his use of "mirror quotations" (as an alternative to direct quotation),[41] his support for the bipartite division of the soul or even his use of Stoic or Aristotelian terms, which by this stage had become common currency. Other characteristics observed in Alcinous' usage of Plato are his (excessive) praise of his great predecessor and the attempt to magnify Plato's contribution (as if that were necessary) by attributing the work of other philosophers to him. This article has focused on Alcinous' use of Plato, but perhaps *misuse* of Plato would be a more apt description for some of the more interesting features of this account: it seems quite clear given Alcinous' praise of Plato and lack of innovative content of his own, that this is not the result of any hidden agenda, but simply the result of a lack of familiarity (or indifference to) the original contexts of many of Plato's remarks in the dialogues themselves.

We do not need to assume that Alcinous' knowledge of Plato was only indirect (via doxographies), but it is certainly the case that the intervening tradition has obscured his view and led to these misconstruals. It is clear that Alcinous draws upon a wide range of the dialogues in his exposition, but he has reduced Plato to the purveyor of a series of doctrines and seems to have little interest in the literary context in which these doctrines were expounded.

41 Whittaker (1990), XIV–XIX notes that these inversions were common in later Platonism and furnishes several examples in Philo, Plutarch, Numenius and Proclus.

CHAPTER 11

Numenius: Portrait of a Platonicus

Polymnia Athanassiadi

I *Realia*

About Numenius' life and career we know next to nothing, while for his contribution to philosophy we have to rely on a disparate group of fragments and testimonies found mainly in the works of Christian authors. Our sources variously qualify him as Pythagorean or Platonist. Yet the fact that the same authority can present him as belonging to both categories is symptomatic at once of the philosophical mood of early imperial times, and of Numenius' own sense of identity.[1] Indeed a review of the ideological climate in the decades preceding and following the establishment of the Roman Empire reveals a growing tendency towards the formulation of a dogmatic Platonism which is centered on metaphysics and increasingly associated with new forms of Pythagoreanism. In the globalized world of the Long Hellenistic Age, philosophy became ever more intermingled with religion, while the distinction between a high and a low spirituality progressively disappeared. As we shall see, Numenius' contribution towards providing a focus for both these trends, which are epitomized in the formula ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ, borrowed from *Tht.* 176b, as the ultimate goal of all philosophical and theosophical endeavour, was decisive.[2]

The only reliable clue in an attempt to establish Numenius' dates is provided by the attribution to him by Clement of Alexandria (150s–216), of the dictum: "What is Plato but an Atticizing Moses?"[3] For the rest, his chronology depends on an assessment of the influences undergone by Numenius and of

1 Pythagorean: Origen, *CC* I 15 etc; V 57; Eusebius, *PE IX* 7.1 etc; Nemesius, *de Nat. Hom.* 2.70.1–2 (p. 17.17–18 Morani); Calcidius, *in Tim.* 295, 1–2 Bakhouche. Platonist: Iamblichus, *de An.*, Stobeus, *Anth.* I 374, 21.25 Wachsmuth; Proclus, *in Remp.* II 96.11. For Longinus (*ap.* Porphyry, *V.Plot.* 20.72–77), along with a number of other thinkers including Plotinus, Numenius "expounded the principles of Pythagorean *and* Platonic philosophy". Unless otherwise stated, "fr. 1" etc. refers to the fragments of Numenius in the edition of E. des Places (1973).

2 For these tendencies, Gerson (2013); on the ingredients of the philosophical *koine* which emerged at this time, Athanassiadi and Macris (2013), 47–50 and on "the Long Hellenistic Age", 46.

3 *Strom.* I 22.150.4 (= fr. 8.13).

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the impact made by his own thought on others. A comparative analysis of the works of thinkers, such as Atticus, in the light of the philosophical novelties introduced by Numenius argues persuasively for a floruit around the middle of the second century.[4] Yet if Numenius' dating can be only approximately determined, there is at least substantial agreement as regards his origin: according to sources chronologically and ideologically close to him, Numenius was a Syrian and more specifically an Apamean. This is how Longinus, Amelius and Porphyry present him (*VP* 17.18). More significantly, the move in 269 to Apamea of the Italian Gentilianus Amelius – an ardent admirer of Numenius' philosophical output most of which he knew by heart (*VP* 3.44–46) – suggests that by the late third century a tradition initiated by our philosopher had turned the city where he lived and taught into a center actively, and it would appear uninterruptedly, dedicated to his philosophical heritage.

The Amelius who emigrated to Apamea had been for over two decades the most prominent pupil of Plotinus,[5] in whose school at Rome Numenius was read and commented as an authority. Indeed there is ground for surmising that Numenius had already occupied a place of honor in Ammonius Saccas' lecture room, from which both Plotinus and Longinus emerged as experts on Numenian philosophy.[6] Nemesius' testimony in this respect is significant, for in reporting Ammonius' theories on the immateriality of the soul, he associates him (κοινῇ) with Numenius.[7] More specifically, when Nemesius details how Ammonius succeeded in solving the problem of what happens to the essence of the soul when it comes together with the body, this solution, which rests on the soul's essential immutability, faithfully echoes Numenius' psychology as presented in Porphyry's *Cave of the Nymphs*.[8] Equally valuable towards detecting Numenius' influence on Ammonius is the testimony of the 5th century Platonist Hierocles of Alexandria, who presents him as the

4 Karamanolis (2013), sec. 1. If the Cronius to whom Lucian dedicates his *Peregrinus* shortly after 165 is to be identified with Numenius' *hetairos*, then we have an additional clue for placing the floruit of our philosopher in the mid-2nd century: cf. Dillon (1977/1996), 362. What bolsters this hypothesis is the rarity of the name Cronius, which allows us to suggest that by dedicating to him a satire on the irrationality of the hardships of a Cynic existence Lucian is mocking the ascetic morals proclaimed by Numenius and Cronius in *The Cave of the Nymphs*.

5 To Longinus' mind at least, Amelius' philosophy was as original as that of Plotinus: Porphyry, *V.Plot.* 20.70–72.

6 Porphyry, *V.Plot.* 20.37–38, for Longinus' schooling with Ammonius.

7 *de Nat. Hom.* 2.69.11–70.2 (p. 17.16–18 Morani).

8 *de Nat. Hom.* 3.129.8–130.7 (p. 39.16–40.6 Morani). Cf. below, p. 199.

divinely illuminated master (θεοδίδακτος) who freed philosophy from discord and the spirit of faction, and handed over to his pupils the harmonious entity that Hierocles styles as "Plato's purified philosophy".[9] As will become clear from our analysis, Numenius' principle of *homodoxia* can easily be recognized behind these complementary endeavours.[10]

By the 260s, when Numenius had been part of the philosophical curriculum not just in his native Apamea and in Alexandria, but also in Athens and Rome, an allegation began to circulate in Greece that Plotinus' philosophy consisted in nothing more than the copying of Numenius' theses.[11] It was at this time that Porphyry arrived from Athens to join Plotinus' class, and, seeing the extent to which Amelius had mastered the theoretical baggage of both Numenius and Plotinus, invited him to refute the accusation of plagiarism on behalf of their teacher. It took Amelius only three days to write a treatise that he entitled *On the difference between the doctrines of Plotinus and Numenius*, which he duly dedicated to Porphyry and through which he rehabilitated Plotinus' philosophical autonomy.[12]

While regretting the loss of this work, one cannot help suspecting that the influence of Numenius on Plotinus must have been massive, and that the Egyptian thinker would have been seen as less of a pioneer had the bulk of Numenius' work come down to us. Unfortunately, however, the latter seems to have suffered a virtual *damnatio memoriae* in late Platonic circles, a phenomenon which is at the root of the disappearance of his works, and whose causes will be discussed below. But to revert to the link between Amelius and Apamea, which proved so strong that it effaced from the memory of later generations his Tuscan origin,[13] the only way his removal from Rome can be explained is by a desire to arrive at the very source of the tradition that Plotinus had animated for him. That Numenius' legacy was flourishing in Apamea both institutionally and more personally is a hypothesis also bolstered by Iamblichus' decision to settle there, rather than in his native Chalcis or holy Emesa, on returning to Syria from his grand tour.[14]

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9 On θεοδίδακτος, Hierocles *ap.* Photius, *Bibl.* cod. 214, 172a4 and 251, 461a31; ἀστασίαστον τὴν φιλοσοφίαν παραδέδωκε πᾶσι τοῖς αὐτοῦ γνωρίμοις: *ibid.* 251, 461a36–38; for the Πλάτωνος διακεκαθαρμένη φιλοσοφία: *ibid.* 214, 173a39–40.

10 See below 187.

11 Porphyry, *V.Plot.* 17.1 ὑποβάλλεσθαι; *ibid.* 17.23 ὑποβολιμαῖος; *ibid.* 17.24 ὑποβαλλόμενος.

12 An important detail about this treatise is that it was circulated as a *biblion* (*V.Plot.* 17.4), that is in the codex form of all propaganda religious literature.

13 Thus in the Souda (A 1549, I 138.16), Amelius is described as Apamean.

14 Athanassiadi (1995), 245–6.

Against this strong direct and indirect evidence for Numenius' Apamean roots and *Nachleben*, the sixth-century polymath John Lydus refers to him as a Roman (*de Mensibus* IV 80), a description that is more telling about Lydus and his world-view than about Numenius. A Byzantine civil servant based in Constantinople, who wrote a book on Roman institutions, Lydus conceived Rome as a symbol for the idea and reality of Empire and, in tune with the spirit of the Justinianic age, declared the Syrian philosopher a Roman.[15]

II Identity

As a teacher Numenius saw himself as belonging to the tradition that stemmed from Plato. Yet, which Plato? Not the one appropriated by his self-appointed heirs, the Sceptics. In a work entitled *On the divorce of the Academics from Plato*, which survives in substantial fragments thanks to the malice of Eusebius who used it to demonstrate the quarrelsome and petty nature of the Greek philosophical tradition, Numenius proclaimed his own profession of faith by offering a definition of Plato's identity and legacy. To his mind "the real Plato" was first and foremost a Pythagorean (fr. 1a; fr. 24.57; cf. fr. 7), but he was also the disciple and continuator of Socrates. From the Numenian perspective the latter appears as an ambivalent figure, at once a jester and a mystic who had recourse to humour in order to make Pythagoras' theology accessible to the man in the street (fr. 24.57–79). For this deeply humane behaviour Socrates paid with his life at the hands of the Athenian populace; and this, Numenius thought, served as a lesson to the young Plato who, while preserving the essence of the Socratic doctrines, distanced himself from his teacher's manner of imparting them (fr. 23; fr. 24.59–62). This caution resulted in a certain obscurity of style that Numenius felt it his duty to clarify primarily through the interpretation of the mythical and allegorical element of the Platonic corpus.[16]

Behind this obscurity, one also detects an axiom of the mystical Platonism of Numenius' day: that the ideal medium for the teaching of theological truths is orality. Contrary to the example of his masters, and despite his awareness that

15 If Numenius had taught in Rome for a period, as suggested by Dodds (1960), 6–7 and Frede (1987), 1038, it is impossible that both Longinus and Porphyry should have ignored the fact. On Lydus, see Maas (1992).

16 See below, 194–6. Tactical dissimulation in the transmission of religious dogma is a principle in all mystical traditions. For the importance of this strategy, known as *taqiyya* in parallel Islam, see Amir-Moezzi (2014).

once severed from its author the written text becomes exposed to an infinite variety of misreadings,[17] Plato chose to couch in writing a tradition that had reached him through Socrates, but in fact went back to Pythagoras and beyond him to the εὐδοκιμοῦντα ἔθνη of the East (fr. 1a). But in doing so he observed the fundamental rule of all mysticism that the mysteries are not to be divulged to all and sundry, and reserved the fullness of his metaphysical theory for the oral teaching that he addressed to a spiritual elite.[18] As a result, his esoteric prose is full of undertones that needed to be elucidated by a spiritual expert such as Numenius. Unlike him however, Plato's self-proclaimed followers, the Sceptics, proved unable to read between the lines and, missing the meaning of the text, they arrived at a singular misunderstanding of the Platonic heritage, indeed an outright betrayal of the master's thought.

Deliberately or unawares, out of ignorance, stupidity or a sinful desire to appear original, the self-proclaimed heirs of Plato breached the sacred rule of doctrinal concord – *homodoxia* (fr. 24.12–18). A Platonic term describing relations between rulers and ruled in the ideal state (*Rep*. 433c), *homodoxia* is raised by Numenius to a principle of philosophical life, denoting on the one hand the absolute loyalty that the successive generations of disciples must display towards the doctrines of the founder of the *haeresis* and on the other the harmony that should at all times reign among its members (τὸ ἦθος τῶν δογμάτων, fr. 24.8). It is with this supreme rule in mind that Numenius surveyed the contemporary philosophical scene only to discover that, apart from the Epicureans, no other textual community fulfilled its criteria.[19] Thus, if Numenius' primary aim in writing his diatribe was to establish the identity of Plato as a Pythagorean by dissociating him from the moral, aesthetic and intellectual relativism preached by the self-styled Academics (fr. 25.46–9), a further and equally important objective was to attack the incompetent practitioners of the philosophical profession among his contemporaries; his main enemies, as he wrote, were not the phantoms of the past, but the representatives of the thriving Neo-Sceptic movement, the Cynics of his day, and most importantly the Stoics whom he condemns as

17 The Platonic *loci classici* on the inability of the written text to convey spiritual truth are *Phdr*. 275d–e and *Ep.* VII 341b–d.

18 Richard (2005). In his book on the transmission of the Quran, Amir-Moezzi (2011) opposes the written tradition of the Quranic canon (*le Coran silencieux*) to the living Quran of a diachronic orality (*le Coran parlant*).

19 As regards the Epicureans of his own day, with whom he may have entertained a personal relationship in Apamea, see Athanassiadi (2006), 100–101, Numenius declares ἠρεμεῖ τὰ δόγματα: fr. 24, 32.

petty technicians whose moral and intellectual activity is irrelevant to the philosopher's task.[20]

Yet despite its polemical character, sarcastic tenor and the elitist spirit that pervades it, the treatise *On the divorce of the Academics from Plato* brings a positive message: that the different paths of philosophical enquiry are all offshoots of the same revealed wisdom and, if followed according to the norms established by their founders, they constitute a way of life which is certain to lead to the goal of all philosophy – ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ.

III On the Good

> If anyone imagines that, while cleaving to the things of this world, he sees the Good flying towards him, and then, while immersed in lust, thinks that he has encountered the Good, he is utterly deluded (fr. 2.17–19).

In these words we have the stern warning of a spiritual master to his circle of disciples. To convey the state of mind which crowns the long and harsh ascent towards the goal of divinisation, Numenius presents to his audience an image of rare poetic power and immediacy[21] – that of a man patiently waiting by a vantage post who suddenly, with a single sharp glance, espies a solitary fishing boat, lost in the waves of a rough sea. In describing the vision of the Good, Numenius speaks from direct experience.[22] The presupposition for attaining this state is the freeing of the mind from all earthly attachments (πόρρω ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν: fr. 2.11), the abandonment of all that pertains to the human condition. The mystic union is not to be achieved by piling up erudition and scholastic analysis, but through the single-minded and passionate search for the Good away from all earthly concerns and ambitions. This is the μέγιστον μάθημα that the Apamean has retained from Plato (fr. 2.22–3 and *Rep*. 505a2).

The passage we have just discussed belongs to the dialogue *On the Good*. Title, form and content bear a distinctive Platonic seal, though as Dillon has pertinently remarked in this connection the tone of the Numenian dialogue is more reminiscent of the products of contemporary Hermetic – and I would

20 περὶ τὸ τεχνικὸν ὤφθησαν μικρολόγοι: fr. 24, 44–45. On Numenius' systematic polemic against the Stoics, see the passages collected by Zambon (2002), 205, n.8.

21 Like Plato, Numenius has recourse to poetic images as a didactic device.

22 κατεῖδε: fr. 2.10; ὁμιλῆσαι τῷ ἀγαθῷ μόνῳ μόνον: *ibid.* 11–12.

add, Gnostic – literature than of Plato.[23] What is strange though about this work, whose link with Plato's oral heritage is proclaimed in several ways, is its line of transmission: only two out of the twenty-two fragments that form our collection have come down to us through a representative of the Platonic succession, in this case Proclus. The rest owes its survival to the enthusiasm, or curiosity, that the treatise inspired in three important Christian thinkers: Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea and Nemesius of Emesa.

One suspects that the *On the Good* extended over ten books, thereby combining Pythagorean mystical arithmology with Platonic practice. However this may be, from the twenty-two fragments at our disposal, which come from books 1 to 6, we can tentatively reconstruct Numenius' ontological system, and more significantly, penetrate his religious mentality, deciphering on the one hand what it owes to the author's intellectual milieu, and on the other his personal contribution to it. A prime objective of this treatise (whose title alludes to Plato's famous lecture)[24] is to systematise the religious traditions of those nations which had succeeded in maintaining unadulterated "the doctrines and the rites" that had been divinely revealed to them, and to integrate the resulting synthesis into a dogmatic framework. This framework is necessarily provided by Plato, who in his Pythagorean garb is the very last exponent of the truth in Greece, the same truth that Numenius finds in the teachings and practices of the Brahmins and the Jews, the Magi and the Egyptians (fr. 1a). To the mind of as austere an arbiter of theological erudition and Platonic wisdom as Origen, Numenius had a profound knowledge of all these traditions, having painstakingly investigated their holy scriptures (βασανίσας) in order to harvest from them "what appeared to him to be the truth".[25]

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23 Dillon (1977/1996), 363. See Turner in this volume, 292–315. The whole treatise is *an interpretation* of Plato's metaphysics in the light of other theologies, as Eusebius pertinently remarks when quoting specific passages: *PE* XI 21.7: τὴν Πλάτωνος διάνοιαν ἑρμηνεύων. Cf. *ibid.* XI 10, 14: ἐπὶ τὸ σαφὲς διερμηνεύων not just Plato but also the much more ancient Moses.

24 See fr. 19 *ad fin.* and cf. Aristoxenus *Harmonica* II 30.16–31.3 Macran. Not only does Numenius reproduce the title of Plato's famous lecture; he also hints at his ἄγραφα δόγματα or ἄγραφοι περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ συνουσίαι. For a list of passages on Plato's oral teaching, Richard (2005), Nos 1–28, p. 248–75. For the importance of the oral transmission of the Platonic theology, see Gerson in this volume, 316–35.

25 Origen, *CC* I 15 (=fr. 1b); according to Origen (*CC* IV 51) Numenius, "a surpassingly excellent expounder of Plato, and who held a foremost place as a teacher of Pythagoras, in many of his works quotes from the writings of Moses and the prophets"; cf. Athanassiadi (2006), 92.

Numenius pursues his exploration of the nature of the Good in the context of the fundamental Platonic antithesis between being and becoming. He cites from memory the *locus classicus* on the polarity between the eternal and the ephemeral in *Timaeus* 27d–28a,[26] and against this background constructs his triadic system, with its ruling principles of hierarchy and mediation. Three gods, directly descending from each other (fr. 21) and variously named and qualified, constitute this theology, whose three hypostases flow so effortlessly into each other that we may talk of a single divine entity in three forms. Significantly, Numenius presents the doctrine of the three gods as having the purest Platonic pedigree, with Socrates and Plato as its exponents.[27]

According to the Numenian nomenclature the first god (fr. 12.3, 12–13) is commensurate with the good (αὐτοάγαθον fr. 20.12) and with being (οὐσία καὶ ὄν, frr. 6.6 and 5; αὐτοόν fr. 17.4); he is also the father (frr. 12.2; 21.1) and king of the all (fr. 12.13), while, according to a formula that Numenius borrows from the wisdom of the Jews (fr. 13 and *Exodus* 3.14), he is "the one who is".[28] Incorporeal (ἀσώματος fr. 6), incommunicable (ἀκοινώνητος, fr. 56, again with reference to the Jewish god) and uninvolved in creation (ἀργὸς ἔργων συμπάντων, fr. 12.12–3), the first principle is immovable (ἑστώς, fr. 15.2), simple, indivisible and relating only to himself (ἁπλοῦς, μὴ … διαιρετός, ἑαυτῷ συγγιγνόμενος, fr. 11.11–13). Yet, while he is beyond both essence (ἐποχούμενος ἐπὶ τῇ οὐσία, fr. 2.16) and comprehension (παντάπασιν ἀγνοούμενος, fr. 17.4), he is also τὸ ὄν (fr. 5), being congenital with essence (σύμφυτος τῇ οὐσίᾳ, fr. 16.10), and also identical with the first mind (πρῶτος νοῦς, frr.17.3–4, 20.12) and the νοητόν (fr. 7.2). The second god is double in nature and function (frr. 11, 12, 21), a bridge between being and becoming, an intermediary between his father (fr. 12.2–3) and his offspring, while partaking in both. He is the creator of the physical world (δημιουργός, ποιητὴς, fr. 13.21), its κυβερνήτης (fr. 18) and νομοθέτης (fr. 13), at once different from and identical with his creation (ποίημα), the physical cosmos which constitutes the third god (fr. 21). As Numenius unambiguously declares, ὁ θεὸς μέντοι ὁ δεύτερος καὶ τρίτος ἐστὶν εἷς (fr. 11.13–14).

26 fr. 7.8–12; cf. frr. 3, 5, 8 and 16. An additional indication of the oral style at the basis of his exposition is given when Numenius finds it necessary to inform his audience that he is citing Plato from memory (fr. 7.8).

27 fr. 24.51–53 and Plato, *Ep.* II 312e.

28 Ὁ ὢν (fr. 13.4); cf. Origen, *Princ.* I 1.6 and Puech in discussion after Dodds' paper (1960), 35–36: "un Dieu qui est et qui se pense – ὁ ὢν et non τὸ ὄν"; in support of the reading ὁ ὢν and its biblical connections, I would quote fr. 56, where Numenius identifies Jehovah with his first god and father, and also fr. 30.5–6, with its clear reference to *Gen.* 1:2; good discussion in Edwards (2010), 116–17; cf. Gerson (2013), 211. But see Tarrant (1979).

The apparent inconsistencies in the definitions that Numenius applies to the three levels of reality have to do not so much with the variety of their functions as with the style of his discourse, which is definitely elusive;[29] but why? Fundamentally a teacher whose vocation was to provide an exemplum while guiding others along the road towards the mystic experience, Numenius adapted his images and terminology to the questions put to him at any particular time. To some extent the conflicting statements in the fragments at our disposal derive from the fact that we lack the larger context, which was provided by the daily experience of a circle, the treatise having originated, as with Plotinus, in an ambiance of living dialogue. Fr. 15 for example states that the first god leads an immovable life; his condition is to all intents and purposes that of στάσις. Yet when needing to reassure his audience about the permanence of divine providence, Numenius has to modify his statement and talk of an "innate movement", instrumental in guaranteeing on the one hand the eternity and the orderly state of the world, and on the other individual salvation. Likewise the ambiguity concerning the identity and functionality of the first two principles has to do with the nature of the thing taught, which defies both analysis and publicising. For, as Plato says in the passage that was at the back of Numenius' mind as he developed his ideas, "it is not possible … to divulge to everybody the creator and father of the universe" (*Tim.* 28c). Thus, having talked about the first principle, Numenius has to ask his audience to consider as unsaid the words he has just uttered, and changes course.[30]

While he finds it impious to discuss the first god, he is happy to explain how the duality or ambiguity of the second manifests itself. Relating both to the intelligible and to the sensible sphere (fr. 15.5), the demiurge is the agent of mediation, the one who gives birth to the world (fr. 16.4–5) "by proxy" (πρόσχρησις, fr. 22), that is through the contemplation of the thoughts of the first god. The term (if not the concept) used by Numenius to describe the creative activity comes straight from a similar context in the *Timaeus* (28a7: προσχρώμενος), but Numenius applies it to all three levels of reality in order to emphasise the singleness of the divine in thought and action, and more importantly the providence which extends throughout the cosmos.[31] It is in illustrating this second point that he explains how the duality of the second god affects his identity: while taking care of his creation (ἐπιμελούμενος), the demiurge "loses sight

29 "Consistency was elusive for Numenius" Gerson (2013), 223, a remark already made by Amelius, *ap.* Porphyry, *V.Plot.* 17.37–8: ἀνδρὸς οὐ μάλα προχείρου ἑλεῖν ὑπάρχοντος διὰ τὴν ἄλλοτε ἄλλως περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ὡς ἂν δόξειεν φοράν.

30 fr. 12.8–12: ἔστω μὲν ἐκεῖνα ἄρρητα.

31 For a fuller and clearer description of this process, *CO* 37.

(or conscience) of himself" (ἀπερίοπτος ἑαυτοῦ γίγνεται (fr. 11.18–19) and is torn away (σχίζεται) from the νοητόν (fr. 11.17). In another passage, Numenius shows the second god descending the planetary ladder in order to gratify "each one of us" with a burst of radiance (τοῖς ἀκροβολισμοῖς) as he reaches the sublunary region (fr. 13.19). Here we are given a clue to the manner in which the theurgic union is effected. Numenius has already allowed us a glimpse into the human side of this meeting: the mortal can reach it through "a divine method", a discipline that can be taught (fr. 2). As in Plotinus however, the mystic union once achieved does not constitute a permanent acquisition: as the god departs to regain, according to Numenius, his noetic hypostasis, the mortal experiences the extinction of the blissful condition with which he has been blessed.[32] In his desire to stress the factor of divine grace, Numenius shows the demiurge foregoing his βίος εὐδαίμων (fr. 12.21–2) in the interest of human salvation. And at the same time, crossing the boundary of theoretical discourse, he recommends a method, which, having recourse to understatement, he describes as οὐ ῥαδία (fr. 2.20).[33]

As suggested by the foregoing analysis, it is within the larger context of Chaldaean theology and practice that several of the most obscure passages of the treatise *On the Good* can be elucidated. For example the double identity and activity (δυάς) of the second hypostasis of the Numenian triad – the Twice Beyond of the *Oracles* – is clearly articulated in fragment 8 of the Chaldaean revelation:

> For it has this double character: both to possess the intelligibles
> And to bring sense-perception to the worlds.

This is one of many parallel passages, culminating in Numenius' fr. 17, which reproduces almost verbatim *CO* 7 on the confusion in peoples' minds between the first and the second intellect. Addressing humanity at large, the philosopher adopts the tone of a hierophant:

> O men, that Intellect which you imagine to be supreme is not so, for there is another intellect prior to this one, which is older and more divine. (trans.) Dillon, slightly modified.

and reproduces in style, spirit and letter the injunction of the Chaldaean oracle:

32 fr. 12 and *Enn.* VI 9 [9], 11.45–48. For an analysis of frr. 11 and 12, Athanassiadi (2006), 50–51.

33 Below, 200.

> All things did the Father bring to completion, and handed them over to the Second Intellect whom all you, race of men, call the First.

Here, more unmistakably than elsewhere, the vocabulary, content and tone of Numenius' discourse convey the atmosphere of this Platonic revelation in whose birth and elaboration Numenius may well have played an active part.[34]

One way of solving the inconsistencies of Numenius' metaphysical system is by reference to the theory and practices evolved in the *Chaldaean Oracles*.[35] Equally, when judging the clarity of the Numenian discourse as transmitted to us, one has to take into consideration both the intellectual capacity and the prejudices of each source. To the mind of a scholastic reader like Longinus, for instance, Numenius was lacking in precision (ἀκρίβεια, Porphyry *VP* 21.5–10). A literary critic, according to Plotinus, who understood nothing about philosophy (φιλόλογος μὲν ὁ Λογγῖνος, φιλόσοφος δὲ οὐδαμῶς: *VP* 14.19–20), Longinus demonstrated the truth of this crushing remark, when on being presented with a faithful copy of Plotinus's doctrines he assumed that he had been given a manuscript full of mistakes! (*VP* 20.5–9). Proclus on the other hand is a hostile reader who sneers at the terminology applied by Numenius to the divine triad (fr. 21). Yet in this case it is clear that the father-son-grandson relationship that Numenius attributes to the ontological principles is no more than a pedagogic device used to bring out on the one hand the unity and diversity of the world, and on the other the status of divine hypostases which, depending on the angle of perception, fluctuates between transcendence and immanence. Equally, the term "father" refers us to the Chaldaean nomenclature in which the first principle is described as "father" (*CO* 3, 7, 14 etc.), "paternal principle" (*CO* 13) or "paternal intellect" (*CO* 22, 36, 37, 109).

IV Myth and its exegesis

Through their gift of cults, myths and holy texts, the gods revealed truth to the sacred nations. And while the common people had to ensure that in its practical aspect this sacred culture remained intact and unchanged, it was the duty of the theologians – poets and thinkers – to serve the θεοπαράδοτος truth of their national tradition by elucidating its hidden meaning. So far as we can judge from the fragments at our disposal, a significant element of Numenius'

34 As argued in Athanassiadi (2006), 84–87, the *CO* could be the fruit of the collaboration between a prophet (Julian the Theurgist) and a philosopher (Numenius).

35 For a discussion of parallel passages in the two texts, Zambon (2002), 253–68.

project involved demonstrating how Homer, Plato and mystery cults of various ethnic origins that were practised in the oecumenical state of his day all employed a symbolic language in order to propagate a spiritual message.

In what survives of this great Numenian enterprise we find evidence of a sustained effort to make sense of the symbols used in the Eleusinian mysteries (fr. 55) and the cult of Mithra, as well as in the myths employed by Homer and Plato. The sole identifiable passage from a work that he entitled Περὶ τῶν παρὰ Πλάτωνι ἀπορρήτων (fr. 23) shows Numenius exploiting the *Euthyphro* to shed light on Plato's devastating criticism of the Athenian religious establishment as embodied in the priest after whom the dialogue is named; for Euthyphro's ignorance, arrogance and stupidity serve to set the Socratic and Platonic understanding of theological truth in high relief.[36] At the same time Numenius discovers in the Platonic myth of Atlantis an allegory of the eternal fight between good and evil in the world: as nurslings of the goddess of wisdom, the Athenians are endowed with a superior soul (καλλίων), while their rivals, the inhabitants of Atlantis, have a demonic nature, and as the foster children of the god who presides over generation, are relegated to the West which is the home of maleficent demons (fr. 37). It is not necessary to consider here whether this exegesis, which enjoyed a considerable success in the third century (fr 37.4 and 24–26), along with Numenius' reworking of the myth of Er (fr. 35) and his identification of the soul's prison in *Phaedo* 62b with pleasure (fr. 38),[37] belonged to the same work as the *Euthyphro* interpretation: what is significant is the use of the term ἀπόρρητα in the title of the treatise, with its clear reference to the esoteric teachings of mystery cults. And the title of Numenius' lost work ἔποψ (hoopoe), mentioned by Origen in the context of the symbolic interpretation of biblical texts (fr. 1c), may be regarded on similar lines. As has often been noted, the name of the bird itself recalls the initiate (ἔποψ–ἐπόπτης), but there is more to it than the mere similarity of sound. In Attar's *Conference of birds*, the hoopoe is the guide who leads the company of birds to God. Given the connection of the hoopoe with King Solomon in the Quran and in Persian lore, it is likely that the mystic status of the bird originated within a Hebrew context, to which Numenius was not foreign, if we are to believe Origen, who specifically associates the work with the allegorisation of the Jewish prophetic tradition.[38] More generally Numenius saw himself as the exegete – and indeed the populariser – of mysteries which had for too long

36 For an analysis of the fragment, Lamberton (1986), 62–65.

37 See the analysis of this fragment in the light of several Platonic passages, Tarrant (2015a), 144–5.

38 *CC* IV 51.

inhabited the innermost sanctuaries – the *adyta* – of temples as much as the minds of theologians (fr. 55).

A prime example of the systematic exploitation of a poetic image for theological purposes is provided by the exegesis of the ἄντρον of the nymphs in Book XIII of the Odyssey (102–112). The combined testimonies of Porphyry, Proclus and Macrobius allow us to reconstruct the interpretation of the Homeric passage devised in Numenius's circle and authored by the master himself and his ἑταῖρος, Cronius. Before attempting to ascribe specific passages and ideas to one or the other author, it may be helpful to consider the position of Cronius in relation to Numenius, with whom he is normally coupled in the sources as "ἑταῖρος". Ἑταῖρος is a polyvalent term used indiscriminately in late antique philosophical circles to denote the teacher (as in Porphyry *VP* 17.18), the fellow-pupil, and the disciple. A parallel designation in contemporary Christian, Hermetic and Gnostic gatherings is the term ἀδελφός – brother – with its emphasis on intimacy and equality within the spiritual circle. The precedence normally assigned to Numenius in our sources implies seniority, and Cronius seems to have been one of those περὶ Νουμήνιον[39] (*Antr.* 34.8–9) who were singled out to hand down the παράδοσις – even perhaps the special disciple chosen by the master to succeed him as διάδοχος. It is true that in his indignant apostrophe to the enemies of Christianity during the Great Persecution, Arnobius reverses the normal order when presenting the two theologians as the prophets of a religious discourse rivaling that of Christ, but this may be no more than a rhetorical device invented to belittle contemporary Platonism.[40] What should retain our attention in this context is the recognition implied in Arnobius' attack of the status that Numenius' religious philosophy had acquired by the 300s.

Coming back to *the Cave of the nymphs*, it would appear that, when composing his opuscule, Porphyry had in front of him both Numenius' and Cronius' texts on the subject. Using computer analysis Harold Tarrant has attempted to show the literal dependence of the Porphyrian text on the two authors: "That Cronius fragment 1 [Leeman] should be in a style closer to Numenius than to Porphyry, and that it should occur at the beginning of Porphyry's *Cave of the Nymphs* seems to guarantee that Cronius had a considerable influence on Porphyry's decision to treat this topic", writes Tarrant and surmises from *Antr.* 21 "that Porphyry did not sharply distinguish the views of Numenius and Cronius on the overall way in which the Cave should be interpreted".[41] Irrespective of

39 Porphyry, *Antr.* 34.8–9.

40 *Adv. Nat.* II 11: vos Platonici, vos Cronio, vos Numenio vel cui liberit creditis? Nos credimus … Christo.

41 Tarrant (2014), 6 and cf. Buffière (1956), 421.

the exact debt to either of his sources, Porphyry's *Cave* is a mine of information on Numenius' cosmology, metaphysics, ethics, psychology, soteriology and eschatology. Indeed when the material extracted from the *Cave* is read together with the shreds of other Numenian works and considered against the intellectual background of the time, it allows us not merely to reconstruct aspects of Numenius' theoretical edifice, but also to penetrate his mentality and become familiar with his manner as teacher and author; and at the same time the reasons for the vast impact made by the Apamean on the philosophy, theology and religion of the third century emerge more clearly.

The systematic interpretation of the Homeric image is based on the diachronic reading of a variety of ethnic and mystical traditions, among which the wisdom of the Persians looms large. Typically the lessons of the παλαιὰ σοφία, which in its spiritual or scientific garb antedates Homer (*Antr.* 4.29–30), are brought home by reference to popular religious custom (*Antr.*16.3–6; 23; 27.5–8) including magical practices (*Antr.*11, 13–19), contemporary mystery rites, headed by those of Mithra (*Antr.* 6; 16; 17; 20; 24), and the theosophical teachings expounded in Hermetic and Gnostic circles. Otherwise the authorities appealed to are the Bible (*Antr.* 10, 11–12 and *Gen* 1:2) and the Egyptian theology (*Antr.* 10.13–17; 24; 27.5–8), Heraclitus, whose verses are quoted as epigrammatic illustrations for Numenius' psychology (*Antr.* 10; 11), Orpheus and the Eleusinian mysteries (*Antr.* 7.7–10; 9.1–3; 14.17–20; 18.7–9), Pherecydes (*Antr.* 31.8–9), Empedocles (*Antr.* 8.15–17), Parmenides (*Antr.* 23.6–7) and Hesiod, whose Pandora myth is subjected to the same symbolic interpretation as "Homer's divine wisdom" in order to support Numenius' doctrine of the two souls – the rational and the irrational – in man and in the universe (*Antr.* 30). Numenius refers primarily to the Pythagorean tradition, of which Plato is, as we have seen, the last representative in Greek. Thus the mystic significance of the Homeric cave on the isle of Ithaca is best understood in the light of the two major myths of the *Republic*: the allegory of the cave (*Antr.* 8 and *R.* 514a) and the story of Er, which is set against a new topographical background inspired by Pythagorean tenets.[42]

Parallel to this multifarious evidence runs a line of argument which interprets the Homeric image by steadily exploiting one of the most popular cults in Numenius' day – Mithraism.[43] For Numenius and Cronius, the typology and

42 As regards the myth of Er, Cronius' contribution must have been important: according to Proclus (*in Remp.* II 110.2–7), Cronius presented Er as the master of Zoroaster.

43 In *Antr.* 20.4–6 we have not only a reference to the typology of the mithraea, but also an allusion to the oecumenism of the cult: πανταχοῦ δ'ὅπου τὸν Μίθραν ἔγνωσαν διὰ σπηλαίου τὸν θεὸν ἱλεουμένων. Moreover, it is stated that, in his guise as the universal initiator of

iconography of contemporary mithraea (*Antr.* 6; 24) and the initiatory rites that took place therein (*Antr.* 6.20–22; 16; 17) serve better than any other authority to elucidate the mystical teaching on the coming and going of souls in this world that Homer enshrined in the cave at Ithaca. Just like the Mithraic cave, the grotto in which Odysseus hid the gifts of the Phaeacians on his return home is an allegory of the cosmos – κόσμου σύμβολον (*Antr.* 7.1; 9,1). But its symbolism is complex: its dark and eerie nature epitomizes the material hypostasis of the universe (*Antr.* 5), at the same time as its design refers to the intelligible essence of the cosmos, its νοητὴ οὐσία (*Antr.* 9.3–4), which is orderly, beautiful and delightful on account of its participation in the realm of ideas.[44] In its latter hypostasis, the cave is the dwelling place of all the invisible powers (*Antr.* 9.10–11; 7.1–2; 9.1–3) who assist man in his effort to overcome his bodily condition.

As the meeting place of the sensible and the intelligible, the Homeric grotto provides Numenius with the ideal space for staging his cosmological drama. Its two openings serve him as the gateways used by the dramatis personae – the northern for their entry on stage and the southern for their exit. In the exegesis put forward by Numenius and Cronius, these gates symbolise the summer and winter tropes or solstices, the two points on the ecliptic when the Sun checks his progress and turns backwards.[45] The southern gate, which in our text corresponds to the astrological sign of Capricorn, is said in the Homeric passage to be the pathway of the gods, while the northern gate, which is identifiable with Cancer, is reserved for mortals. Numenius re-interprets this image and by deploying solely human characters, demonstrates that it is between these two gates that the whole drama of birth, death and afterlife is enacted.

Redrawing the Platonic eschatological map (*Rep.* 614c–615e and *Phd.* 111c–114c) with the aid of Pythagorean arcana, Numenius presents the Galaxy as the area where the souls congregate before incarnation, while also reminding us that, according to Pythagorean belief, the Milky Way is Hades itself (fr. 35.25–28). Here the crowd of individual souls, which still at this point resemble "a people of dreams" (fr. 32.6), are lured away from their spiritual condition by tasting milk and honey, whose sweetness irretrievably compromises their immortality – for honey is a symbol of death, used in libations to

sacred custom, it was Zoroaster who first dedicated a cave to Mithra the creator in the mountainous region of Fars (*Antr.* 6.13–16), and thus inaugurated a universal religious practice.

44 *Antr.* 6.4–6: καλός τέ ἐστι καὶ ἐπέραστος … διὰ τὴν τῶν εἰδῶν μέθεξιν.

45 fr. 31 and 32 = *Antr.* 21–24. The ecliptic is encircled by the Galaxy (περὶ τὸν γαλαξίαν, fr. 32.4; fr. 34.3–6).

the chthonian powers. In this way Nature's cunning tempts the souls to aspire to generation (δι'ἡδονῆς εἰς γένεσιν μεμελετηκυίαις *Antr.* 28.11) and eventually to embark on the unmitigated misfortune of bonding with a body (fr. 35.27). Borrowing his terms from the theosophical vocabulary of his day, Numenius describes incarnation as the enveloping of the soul with the opaqueness of a χιτών (*Antr.* 14.14), and harks back to Heraclitus in describing "the fall into generation" as death in life.[46]

Then begins the soul's descent through the planetary ladder, for which Numenius adopts the Chaldaean, rather than the Mithraic order.[47] The soul's first station on its journey to the earth is Saturn, its last one the Moon. As it traverses the seven planets of the Hellenistic uranography, the individual *soul* acquires to a greater or lesser degree the appetites which characterize each celestial body, and it is in this state of spiritual imperfection and moral degradation that it reaches the gate reserved to the humans in the symbolic cave of Ithaca.[48] Its sojourn there will equal the span of its lifetime on earth, the cave being a metaphor for the arena in which Man engages in his battle against the defects and passions gathered by his soul during its planetary passage.[49] The task is hard and relentless and the rules of the moral discipline required to achieve the final victory over the body are harsh and unbending: "One must put away all outward possessions, be stripped naked and take on the persona of a beggar; and having withered the body away, and cast aside all that is superfluous, and sensual, sit with Athene beneath the olive tree and take counsel with her to find out how he might cut away all the destructive passions of his soul" (*Antr.* 34.1–8, trans. Lamberton modified). It is only after the renunciation of all material goods and carnal pleasures that one is entitled to receive the mystical teaching given to the initiates of the various mystery cults of the Roman world.

But in the symbolic universe devised by Numenius the cave also represents the demonic place between heaven and earth where eschatological

46 fr. 30.10–14. Various terms are used for the process of incarnation: σωματουργία, σαρκοποιία, σαρκογονία (*Antr.* 14.4–14). For an excellent analysis of the "soul's transition from unity to duality" during its descent through the spheres, based on Macrobius, *in Somnium Scipionis* I 12, see De Ley (1972), 27–61.

47 For the latter, cf. Celsus *ap*. Origen, *CC* VI 22.

48 Cf. fr. 49.5–6 (=Aeneas of Gaza *Theophrastus* 12.9–10 Colonna): καὶ γὰρ πρὸ τοῦ σώματος κακίας ἐμπίπλασθαι τὴν ψυχὴν δυνατὸν εἶναι. On the qualities with which each planet endows the soul, fr. 47 Leemans = Macrobius *in Somnium Scipionis* I 12.13–14 Armisen-Marchetti (2003).

49 For the unceasing μάχη in which man has to engage, fr. 43.

judgment takes place. Those mortals who have achieved victory in the battle against the tumult of the senses and, like Odysseus, have succeeded in overcoming "the wrath of the gods of the sea and matter", are directed to the gate of Capricorn. According to a tradition which Numenius attributes once again to "the theologians", this is not the passage through which gods descend to the cave, but rather the gate of immortality through which the wise souls reach the heaven of the fixed stars now that they have achieved divine status. By contrast those souls which have remained ensnared in their passions will have to complete another cycle of incarnation, and, depending on the degree of their failure to liberate themselves from their vile instincts, they may migrate into animal bodies.[50] Despite its Pythagorean credentials, this latter belief has mystified – even shocked – Numenius' readers, ancient and modern. Most recently, for example, Tarrant, refusing to take literally the Numenian doctrine of the soul's transmigration into an animal body, has pronounced it "a noble lie", at the service of a moralizing campaign.[51] But Numenius meant what he said and indeed this theory is at the root of the *odium theologicum* which is responsible for the disappearance of his work.[52]

V The Teacher

> Μέχρι μὲν γὰρ τῆς ὁδοῦ καὶ τῆς πορείας ἡ δίδαξις,
> ἡ δὲ θέα αὐτοῦ ἔργον ἤδη τοῦ ἰδεῖν βεβουλημένου.
> Plotinus, *Enn.* VI 9 [8] 4.15–16

Numenius lived at a time of peace and prosperity when the rhetoric of earthly happiness and progress had reached its zenith, as much through the instruments of state propaganda as through the ministrations of the movement that Philostratus was to dub "the Second Sophistic". The material affluence and the aesthetic wellbeing of the urban classes of the Antonine Empire had bred in

50 Cf. fr. 48.10–14. Note in this connection that Cronius had composed a treatise *On reincarnation* (Περὶ παλιγγενεσίας), in which he defended the thesis that all souls (including those of animals) are rational: Nemesius *de Nat. Hom.* 2.117.2–3 (p. 35.4–5 Morani).

51 Tarrant (2015a), 145–52.

52 To refute this theory, Iamblichus wrote a μονόβιβλον which he entitled Ὅτι οὐκ ἀπ᾽ἀνθρώπων εἰς ζῷα ἄλογα οὐδὲ ἀπὸ ζῴων ἀλόγων εἰς ἀνθρώπους αἱ μετενσωματώσεις γίγνονται, ἀλλ᾽ἀπό ζῴων εἰς ζῷα καὶ ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπων εἰς ἀνθρώπους: Nemesius, *de Nat. Hom.* 2.117.6–118.3 (p. 35.8–11 Morani).

them a psychology of contentment, even hybris.[53] Against this culture of permissiveness and complacency were raised the voices of the Cynic missionary and the Gnostic preacher, but the indiscriminate nature of these attacks and the often exhibitionistic manner of their display meant that they could be written off as the work of eccentrics, who were out to destroy the pleasure of the ordinary man. As a result, such criticism might be countered by ridicule, as witness the diachronic success of the Lucianic satire. More menacingly, the critics of global prosperity in the Roman Empire could be defined as "heretics", an old word with a new and ever more accepted meaning which incorporated the connotation of public enemy.[54]

In contrast to these public and often popular speakers, Numenius did not address his message to the world at large. In his capacity as teacher, he offered to those who formed his class (or rather circle),[55] a sober analysis of ethics and metaphysics based on the dichotomy being-becoming, and it was against this background that he emphasized the infirmity of all things created, including Art and Nature (fr. 52.115). When he spoke, his language was free of aggression –a clear, uncompromising, occasionally passionate discourse which aimed to lead those partaking of it from becoming to being, to Numenius' mind a teachable process for which a "divine method" was at hand.[56] What he offered amounted to a way of life, which demanded of the pupil subjection to an ascetic discipline and absolute devotion to a goal that could only be conquered through the patient toil of self-inflicted poverty.[57] As we can tell from the quotations preserved by those familiar with Numenius' discourse, his could be the inspired language of a visionary as he divulged esoteric truths: "elevating a hymn to three gods" (ἀνυμνήσας) is the term chosen by Proclus to render Numenius' method of imparting the divine hypostases to his audience (fr. 21.1).

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53 This happy state could not possibly last forever, Numenius warned, for Nemesis was at work turning the wheel of fortune to provide balance in human affairs (fr. 59).

54 On the construction of the notions of heresy and heretic in late antiquity, see Athanassiadi (2006), 19–22, 114–16.

55 Cf. Proclus, *in Tim.* II 153.23–4 and III 196.18: οἱ περὶ Νουμήνιον; cf. ibid. I 83.26–27: τοῖς ἀμφὶ τὸν Νουμήνιον.

56 Cf. fr. 2.20 and above, 191–2. As Mark Edwards pertinently remarks (2010), 125, Numenius' "fusion of metaphysics and psychology shows that he, like Plotinus, regarded the deliverance of the soul from its worldly attachments and the purification of the mind from error as inseparable goals".

57 *Antr.* 35.14–15: πτωχοῦ πόνοις καὶ καρτερίαις. The word πτωχὸς in the sense of the follower of a spiritual discipline anticipates its synonyms fakir /dervish in the context of Islamic mysticism: for an analysis, Schimmel, (1975) 120–23.

Pace Dodds,[58] this is not the manner of "a professor of Greek philosophy" delivering himself of a lecture on first principles, but rather that of a mystic using the language of religious exaltation, in which erudition yields prime place to inspiration.

In such a discourse life on earth represents death. Taking his cue from the Socratic analysis in the *Phaedo*, Numenius declares life to be tantamount to suffering and bitterness (ἡ ἐνταῦθα ζωὴ ἐπίμοχθος καὶ πικρά, *Antr.* 18.19), but he also explains that the only way to find release and become alive again (ἀναβιώσκεσθαι) is to accept this fundamental bitterness (πικρία) of material existence, and trample it down. The two terms (πικρὸς and ἀναβιώσκεσθαι) that Numenius uses to recommend the path to immortality refer us respectively to the *Chaldaean Oracles* and to the *Phaedo*, and this combination in a context which details the steps towards rebirth allows us a glimpse into his methodology.[59] "Exceptionally curious" as to the mysteries of existence (fr. 55), Numenius dabbled in most of the intellectual trends on offer, and left his mark on several, both in the area of conventional Academic wisdom and in that of "the Platonic underworld".[60] But at the end of the day he knew how to gather together a rather improbable harvest of concepts and methodologies and lay it at the door of Plato the Pythagorean. Reversing the concluding statement of Fabienne Jourdan in this connection, I would argue that Numenius brought into dialogue with Plato the "oriental traditions" of which he was an acknowledged master, and thereby became the prime contributor to the creation of the "purified Platonic philosophy".[61]

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58 Expression used by Dodds (1960), 61 in the discussion following his lecture at the Fondation Hardt where he concludes, somewhat intuitively, that in none of Numenius' work "do we find the atmosphere of private revelation that one senses in most Gnostic works".

59 *CO* 129 and *Phd.* 71e–72a; cf. Numenius fr. 12, 18: ζῆν τε καὶ βιώσκεσθαι; *Antr.* 23, 13: ἀναβιωσκόμενοι καὶ εἰς τὴν γένεσιν ἀπερχόμενοι.

60 For Numenius' influence on the Platonising Sethian treatises see Turner (2007); on the Hermetic αὐθεντικὸς λόγος (NH VI 3) see Mahé (2007).

61 Jourdan (2013), 10: "il a su faire dialoguer le platonisme avec les traditions orientales". The thought-process which leads Tardieu (1996), 112, to suggest Numenius as the author of the Turin Commentary *On Parmenides* is worth citing here: "un philosophe ne répugnant pas à exprimer ses vues métaphysiques dans le langage religieux d'une révélation; un dialectician capable de réemployer en perspective antistoïcienne les matériaux logiques et conceptuels du stoicisme; un homme de culture, enfin, connaissant la Bible, imprégné de Philon, non irrité par la nouveauté chrétienne, curieux des traditions de l'hellénisme oriental, qu'elles soient mises sous le nom d'Hermès Trismégiste ou sous celui du mage Zoroastre. Ces traits correspondent bien au portrait de Numenius d'Apamée, le 'philosophe Pythagoricien'." For "the purified Platonic philosophy", above 185, n. 9.

The doctrines of a rational and an irrational soul in man (fr. 44) and of a benign and an evil soul in the universe (fr. 34) can be seen as borrowings from Hermeticism and Gnosticism;[62] yet Numenius is able to claim for them a Pythagorean pedigree, harking back beyond Neopythagoreanism to "the old Pythagorean position",[63] and finally ascribe them to Plato himself.[64] This was a transformed Plato, whose twelve curricular dialogues, culminating in the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*, were soon to be read and commented on in the light of the Chaldaean Oracles.[65] The gnostic and/or Iranian influences that both ancient and modern critics have recognised in the radical dualism of a thinker who saw matter as the cause of evil and raised it into an ontological principle are definitely there.[66] Yet despite the explicit presence of evil in every part of the universe (which so shocked Proclus), the emphasis that Numenius lays on the salvational immanence of the divine in the cosmos (fr. 15.8–10), and on the beauty, order, and purposefulness of a creation which is not just the work of a benign demiurge but is a god in itself (fr. 16.16–17), posits him as the thinker who extracted from all the dogmatic novelties he encountered whatever could be used as ingredients for an ultimately optimistic vision of life and the cosmos. Furthermore, if I am correct in thinking that Numenius was instrumental in the production of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, this may be considered his single most notable achievement – that through the creation of the holy book of late Platonism he provided a focus for the disparate dogmas of "the Platonic underworld" endowing it with credentials of respectability.

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62 For the Hermetic origin of the doctrine of the two souls in man, see Iamblichus, *de Myst*. 198.22–201.23 Saffrey and Segonds (2013) (= 268.16–272.16 Parthey 1857). On Gnostic influences on Numenius, Athanssiadi (2006), 143.

63 As Dillon (1977/1996), 379 rightly remarks.

64 For the two souls in Plato, see *Leg*. 896e–897d and Numenius fr. 52.64–70. O'Brien (1999), 23–24 argues that, in reading *Tim.*, "Numenius has resurrected an irrational soul" to account for the disorderly movements of matter in this dialogue, thus importing into the Platonic text, perhaps unknowingly, the Empedoclean theory of the existence of a bad cosmic soul.

65 For the construction of the Platonic curriculum of studies: Athanassiadi (2010).

66 Without denying altogether the thesis of Numenius' "orientalism" put forward by Puech (1934), Dodds (1960), 5–11 plays it down, while Frede (1987), 1048 argues that Numenius' respect for the wisdom of the ancient nations of the East is a convention typical of his time, and lays emphasis on the dependence of his ontology, theology and psychology on the Platonic, Aristotelian and even Stoic tradition (1987), 1071–2. In his exclusion of any Oriental influences from the discussion of Numenius' philosophy Frede is followed by Karamanolis (2013). For a more balanced perspective, Dillon (1977/1996), 361–79, Edwards (2010) and esp. Fuentes (2005).

VI The *epigoni*

Numenius' impact on both pagan and Christian thinkers was massive. He himself had drawn on the oecumenical stock of theological lore from far and wide, being familiar not only with the essential Plato and the Pythagorean tradition, but also with the Jewish and the Christian, the Hermetic and the Mithraic wisdoms. Correspondingly, later generations recognized him as being a crucial figure and also a turning point in the history of philosophy. Among the first to do so was the elusive Ammonius Saccas, who transmitted his appreciation to the two great minds of the third century, the Christian Origen and Plotinus. The former was deeply impressed by Numenius' power of judgment, philosophical integrity and theological liberalism, and passed on this admiration to the most important Christian Platonist to succeed him, Eusebius of Caesarea. Plotinus' life and works, on the other hand, illustrate the impact made by the Numenian principles as filtered through the teaching of Ammonius: after spending more than ten years at the feet of his master, he felt the need to immerse himself in the philosophy of the Persians and the Indians in order to perfect his spiritual training (*VP* 3.13–17). And, though it is true that by the mid-third century the search for Oriental wisdom constituted an indispensable accouterment of the image of the Pythagorean sage,[67] it is reasonable to assume that in Plotinus' case what inspired this spiritual pilgrimage in the East, much more than contemporary literary fashion, was Numenius' veneration for the cultures of the Magi and the Brahmins as imparted by Ammonius.

Turning to Plotinus' two star pupils, Porphyry and Amelius, we may quote, next to the former's own testimony of his dependence on Numenius, the ironical comment of Proclus, who when discussing Porphyry's demonology says that he would be amazed if the Tyrian dared think differently from Numenius (*in Tim.* I 77.22–23). To the overwhelming evidence for Amelius' cult of the Apamean philosopher, we may add that, following in his footsteps, he composed a Commentary on the Gospel of John, at a time when Christianity was already anathema in Platonist circles. [68] In an earlier generation, Atticus' pupil, Harpocratio, had, according to Proclus, coined his metaphysics on the Numenian model of the three gods[69] while the authoritative rival of Iamblichus, Theodore of Asine, whose followers were active and influential well into the fourth century (Julian, *Ep.* 12 Bidez), had espoused Numenius' psychology (Proclus

67 Evidence for this trend is provided by Philostratus' *Life* of Apollonius of Tyana and the *Lives* of Pythagoras by Porphyry and Iamblichus.

68 Eusebius *PE* XI 18, 26; cf. 184–5 above and Athanassiadi (2006), 89–91.

69 *In Tim.* I 304.22–305.2. But see Boys-Stones (2012).

in Tim. II 274.10–14). But the best testimony for the high reputation enjoyed by Numenius at the dawn of the fourth century comes from Arnobius, who illustrates what has been called in another context "pan-Numenianism".[70] For Boys-Stones, the inventor of the term, "pan-Numenianism" signifies the tendency among modern scholars to attribute to the influence of Numenius any original idea that crops up in the writings of Platonist philosophers of the late Antonine era and beyond. Yet the term is not a bad one to describe the fascination that Numenius exerted on those who came after him, a fascination which is epitomized in the move of Amelius – and even more so of Iamblichus – to Apamea at the close of the third century. What happened after that date? Where does the responsibility lie for the changing tide in the reputation of Numenius, to the degree that if it were not for his appreciation by two major Christian Platonists, Numenius would have been no more than a name to us and, on the evidence of Proclus, a discredited one?

Proclus' harsh criticism of Numenius' cosmology, metaphysics and psychology[71] is indeed the best guide in our search for the agent behind the *damnatio memoriae* that progressively overtook Numenius. The fallacy of Numenius' theories (and of those of his followers, Amelius and Theodore) becomes manifest when Proclus exposes them to the light of the Iamblichan philosophical exegesis: these are views that the divine Iamblichus "has smitten" – ἐπερράπισ εν.[72] For it is through his systematic deconstruction of the Numenian παράδοσις that Iamblichus succeeded in making himself the undisputed master of Platonic exegesis and in acquiring recognition not merely as ὁ πάντας ἐν πᾶσιν … κρατῶν, but as literally "divine".[73]

70 For Arnobius' statement, see above, n.40 and cf. Boys-Stones (2012), 6: "The fact that scholars could so readily assume on the basis of a single ambiguous comment that Harpocratio fell in with Numenius against his own teacher is symptomatic of a susceptibility to what one might call 'pan-Numenianism' that sometimes characterizes discussion of second and third-century Platonism".

71 *In Tim.* I 303.27–304.7; *in Remp.* II 128.26–131.14.

72 *in Tim.* II 277.27–28; Iamblichus wrote a book entitled *Πρὸς τοὺς ἀμφὶ Ἀμέλιον καὶ Νουμήνιον ἀντιρρήσεις* (*ibid.* 28–30). The Emperor Julian's silence as regards Numenius is also indicative of the more general climate. In breaking down into two points Proclus' criticism of Numenius in *in Remp.* II 128.26–130.14; 130.15–16; and 131.8-14, Lamberton (1986), 70, misses the tone of the passage which is one of angry attack.

73 Proclus, *in Tim.* III 34.5–6. To the mind of the last successor of the Academy, the divine Iamblichus is τῶν θείων πραγμάτων ἄλλων τε καὶ τῶν νοητῶν ἄριστος ἐξηγητής (Damascius, *PA* III 119.6-9): cf. *id. in Parm.* IV 89.2-3: ὁ τῶν ἐξηγητῶν ἀκριβέστατος. In this connection, Athanassiadi (2013), 378–81.

Numenius' radical dualism in psychology and ethics, his astral pessimism, his dismissal of Aristotle, and his intellectual promiscuity which culminated in the inclusion of the Hebrew and even the Christian theology in the sum total of spirituality, are all tenets that had to be discarded before a new, essentially Platonic, soteriology could be built to challenge the increasingly successful Christian eschatology. This is the task that Iamblichus set himself.[74] However, when assessing Iamblichus' achievement, it becomes apparent that the elements in his system which prompted posterity to rank him as second only to Plato himself (Damascius, *PH* 34A Athanassiadi) are all variations on major Numenian themes: the primacy of Pythagoras, the prominence of Hermetic doctrines and the crucial importance of the Chaldaean theology in the construction of a dogmatic Platonism are founded on principles established by Numenius; for, as the original Apamean had explained at the start of his treatise *On the Good*, to understand Plato we have to hark back to Pythagoras, while including in our panorama the wisdom of the ancient nations of the East (fr.1a).

74 On the Iamblichan soteriological project, Athanassiadi (2015a) and (2017).

CHAPTER 12

Galen and Middle Platonism: The Case of the Demiurge[1]

Julius Rocca

Introduction

Neither a professed Platonist nor an adherent to any school or sect,[2] the physician-philosopher Galen of Pergamum (129–c.216 AD) nevertheless held Plato and his works in the highest esteem. Galen's autobiographical *On my own books* (*Lib. Propr.*) lists "works dealing with the philosophy of Plato". These include: *The Platonist sect*;[3] a four-volume *Commentary on the Medical Statements in the* Timaeus; a three-volume work directed *To those whose opinion on the Forms differs from Plato's*; an eight-volume summary of Plato's dialogues; *On analogy in the* Philebus; a three-volume work, *The parts and faculties of the soul*; *That the faculties of the soul follow the mixture of the body*; the ten-volume *On the doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*.[4] Of this substantial body of engagement with Plato and Platonism, only the two last survive. Galen's *Commentary on the medical statements in the Timaeus* exists only in Greek fragments of book 3 and preserved excerpts in Arabic of books one and four.[5] Galen's *Synopsis of the Timaeus* (one of eight dialogue synopses)

1 An earlier version of this paper was read in Berlin in October, 2015, at a conference on Galen's Natural Philosophy. I am grateful to Professor Philip van der Eijk for funding from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation which allowed me to attend.

2 *Lib. Prop.* XIX.13K; 95, Müller; devotees of such schools are termed "slaves" (δούλους). Galen is cited primarily according to the volume and page number of Kühn's edition, and the relevant Teubner and CMG editions. Abbreviations are those of Hankinson (2008).

3 Περὶ τῆς Πλάτωνος αἱρέσεως, XIX.46K; 122, Müller. The title reminds us that what we are now usually dealing with interactions between philosophical schools of thought (αἱρέσεις). As Glucker (1978), 190–91 argues, the schools of Athens have now given way to "persuasions", of one of which the adherents were *Platonici* (discussed at 207–25). This creates room for a great deal of interpretive scope both within and outside the sect.

4 Nine are extant in the CMG edition by De Lacy. For proof that the work originally comprised ten books, see Boudon-Millot (2007), 230 n.3.

5 Schröder and Kahle (1934). Larrain (1992) published what he claimed as new excerpts. See the sceptical reply by Nickel (2002), and the response by Das (2014).

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survives in the Arabic translation of Hunayn Ibn Ishaq's circle.[6] Galen also expresses a philologist's interest in Platonic texts, mentioning the "Plato of Panaetius" in *Avoiding distress* (Περὶ ἀλυπίας).[7] He was taught by several Platonists, but names only Albinus (a pupil of Gaius),[8] and was not necessarily inclined to his views.[9] For Galen, Plato is "most divine" (τοῦ θειοτάτου).[10] But Galen is also critical of Plato, while fully appropriating him as the exemplar of how best to proceed philosophically,[11] and he does not share a number of Platonism's fundamental tenets. Keen to utilize Platonic soul tripartition in his epistemology and psychology (with varying degrees of success),[12] Galen nevertheless expresses doubt (verging on indifference) regarding the nature and immortality of the soul, and has no fixed view on the creation of the cosmos or the exact nature of god. These are theoretical concerns, of no use to ethical and political philosophy.[13]

Several studies have examined various facets of Galen's Platonism,[14] but what has received little serious attention is how and why Galen engages in

6 Kraus and Walzer (1951).

7 12b. Cf. Nutton (2013), 81. Galen also mentions so-callled Atticiana texts in a fragment of his commentary on the *Timaeus*, 11.107–9 Schröder. Cf. Hatzimichali (2013), 9–10.

8 *Lib. Propr.*, XIX. 16 K; 97 Müller. The reference in *Aff. Dig.* to a "Platonist pupil of Gaius", may be a reference to Albinus (V. 41 K; 28 De Boer). Albinus is known to have written commentaries on *Tim.*, *Phd.*, and *Rep.*, as well as an introduction the dialogues. Cf. Dillon (1977/1996), 266–307; Tarrant (2007), 450–56. Galen also mentions a "Platonist friend" (φίλῳ Πλατωνικῷ) to whom he gave two introductory works on anatomy during his first stay in Rome. *Lib. Propr.*, XIX. 12 K; 94 Müller.

9 "As a pupil of Albinus, Galen would have been *closer* to orthodoxy, but no more is guaranteed." Tarrant (2000), 188.

10 *PHP* IX.9, 598.9 De Lacy; V.792 K. Cf. *UP* 16, II.377 Helmreich; IV.266 K; *MM* 11, X.772 K. Even though Aristotelian investigative methodology is the bedrock of *De usu partium*, Aristotle is not in the same encomiastic league. Cf. Van der Eijk (2009).

11 Cf. De Lacy (1972), 31 ff. As Boys-Stones (2001), 149 has noted: "Galen did not take Plato's (or Hippocrates') authority as his *starting-point*, in the way that the Platonists did: both writers had to earn his respect, and he was capable of correcting them where they seemed wrong to him" (italics in original). Correction and exegesis are the twin aims in Galen's *Commentary on the Timaeus*. Cf. Ferrari (1998), 20–32. On Galen's further manipulations of the *Timaeus*, see Rashed (2009), 90.

12 The weakest point is Galen's demonstration concerning the third part (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) of the soul. Cf. De Lacy (1988).

13 *Propr. Plac.* 3, 60.3–7 Nutton; 2, 56.12–58.21 Nutton. Cf. *PHP* V.766–7 K; 576.27–578.2 De Lacy; V.779–781 K; 586.30–588.27 De Lacy.

14 See De Lacy (1972); Donini (1980); (1992); Singer (1993); Chiaradonna (2009) provides a good overview of Galen and Middle Platonism. An excellent survey is that of

his medical epistemology with a fundamental concept in Plato and Platonism, the Demiurge.[15] I shall briefly review the conceptualisation of the Platonic Demiurge, and proceed to examine Galen's handling of it, focusing on *De usu partium* (*UP*), where it is used most extensively, highlighting Middle Platonist influences, positive and negative.[16] It will emerge that Galen's use of the Demiurge puts him both within and without the Platonic tradition. It conforms with the increasing stress on theological themes in Platonism; yet Galen's unplatonic emphasis on the importance of the Demiurge as a thoroughgoing somatic creative force was later channelled into the philosophical demands of the strands of Abrahamic monotheism.[17] This was hardly Galen's intention, and his use of the Demiurge is better regarded within the intellectual background of his era, where "Platonism was again a dominant philosophy,"[18] and one that made use of the authority of the *Timaeus* to help "construct a textual community, which sought to preserve the original Greek tradition against its appropriation by Christian readers."[19] Above all, while Galen would have agreed with the dictum *Platonem ex Platone saphenizein* (or "to clarify Plato on the basis of Plato"), his use of Plato was overwhelmingly adaptive.

I

There is no doubting the revolutionary impact of Plato's formulation in the *Timaeus* of the notion of the Demiurge (ὁ δημιουργός) to account for the

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Senzasono (1996). On Galen's handling of Platonic soul tripartition see Finamore (2007); Schiefsky (2012). On Galen's attempts to accommodate *Tim.* to his brand of Hippocratism and Aristotelianism, see Vegetti (2000).

15 Schiefsky (2007), argues that Galen's teleology (like Aristotle's) is internal, and that "Galen's descriptions of the ways in which the Demiurge devised the structure of the human body reflect a highly sophisticated, functional analysis of the organism, and there are good reasons to adopt such an approach that are independent of belief in a divine artificer." 371. Yet Galen's Demiurge is regarded as an immutable part of what he creates. While Plutarch claims that a large part of god's vitality and divinity (μοῖρα πολλὴ ζῳότητος καὶ θειότητος) is sown into cosmic matter (*Quaest. plat.* 1001B), Galen reasons similarly of the Demiurge at the microcosmic level.

16 For Middle Platonism, the fundamental study is Dillon (1977). See also Tarrant (2010); Opsomer (2005b) is invaluable for his study of demiurgy in the early Imperial period.

17 See Nutton (2001), especially 23–24.

18 Tarrant (1996), 175.

19 Niehoff (2007), 162, who cites Celsus, Philo and Plutarch as three such second century examples. See also Watson (1988), 222–3.

creation of the cosmos, and, ultimately, all life within the world.[20] The term carries several meanings, chiefly related to the fabricator of a materially finished product. These invoke the world of manual working, a banausic occupation regarded with disdain not only in Plato's era.[21] However, the concept also embraces high office holders or magistrates.[22] Plato's conception of the Demiurge is groundbreaking precisely because he incorporates these varied definitions into a divine craftsman who is also an ordering, controlling entity, inextricably associated with intelligence. In the *Philebus* (27b–28c, 30d), that which constructs (δημιουργοῦν) is linked with the intelligence (νοῦς) that rules the cosmos.[23] With this in mind, it has been argued that the Demiurge is Plato's conception of all that Zeus should be, a supremely rational divine entity governing by established causal laws.[24] He is simultaneously a divine craftsman, builder and architect on a cosmic scale.[25] It is this combination of abilities that underscores Plato's own caveat (*Tim.* 28c): to find the maker and father of the cosmos is a difficult thing. The cosmos assembled is a living being (ζῷον, *Tim.* 30b), though the Demiurge is limited in what he can achieve by matter's recalcitrance.[26] His role in human affairs is to create the immortal soul, delegating the creation of the human frame to created subordinates, the young gods, immortal like himself, albeit because he wishes it (*Tim.* 42d–43a). He constructs only the immortal – rational – part of the human soul, while the physical frame is delegated to the young gods, a set of "ancillary demiurges",[27] who, in their manifold acts of creation, proceed "in imitation of their own maker" (*Tim.* 42e). The need for the Demiurge to do this, to create a set of

20 "The Demiurge of Plato's *Tim.* is a conception much too original to be explained as a synthesis of early thinker's ideas." Solmsen (1963), 480. As Runia (2008), 49–50 puts it: "Plato developed a new approach in which cosmic order is interpreted as divine presence, even if the origin of that order is sought in a higher transcendental realm."

21 Plutarch (*Pericles* 2.1) is dismissive of manual labour (αὐτουργία), stating that even the young, seeing the works of Pheidas or Polycleitus, would not wish thereby to imitate them. In *Marcellus*, 14.5–6, he crucially opposes geometry with mechanics: the latter representing "uncultivated labour" (βαναυσουργίας). Galen, in his handling of demiurgy elevates such work, holding sculptors such as Pheidias and Polycleitus in high regard. Cf. *UP* 3.10, III.239K; I.175 Helmreich (Pheidias); 17.1, IV.352–353K; II.441–442 Helmreich (Polycleitus).

22 Aristotle *Pol.* V.1310 b22: τὰς δημιουργίας.

23 Cf. Armstrong (2004), 175; Menn (1995), 10.

24 See the analysis in O'Meara (2012b).

25 Cf. Karasmanis (2005), 172–174.

26 Cf. Mohr (1985).

27 Broadie (2012), 18. Cf. Burgess (2000).

ancillaries, is "a consequence of his very power: since his direct creations will perforce be eternal, he must hand over … to his subordinates … in order that man (as a composite) may not be immortal."[28] So he is not omnipotent; he constructs from pre-existing matter, not *ex nihilo*; he falls far short of the Abrahamic concept of a creator.[29] All this would prove fertile interpretive ground. As O'Brien (2015) has cogently pointed out: "Demiurgy cannot be reduced to a single, coherent pattern, since the motif was exploited by such a range of thinkers … while there are different representations of demiurgy, this is as a result of divergent readings of the *Timaeus*."[30] Galen should be viewed as part of that investigative tradition, even if his findings were different from those of any other Platonist.

II

At first glance, Galen's use of the Demiurge appears in accord with Platonic orthodoxy.[31] A fragment of the otherwise lost *On Demonstration* (Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi* 600.26–601.4 Rabe; 137.10 Dörrie-Baltes) shows Galen affirming that the young gods, although in theory dissoluble, will never experience dissolution since they will be preserved by the will of the Demiurge.[32] In *The capacities of the soul depend on the mixtures of the bodies* (*Quod animi mores, QAM*), Galen also seems to endorse this view of the role of the young gods (citing in part *Tim.* 43a), but here we also note that Galen interprets it *metaphorically*:

> So, are the capacities of the soul by nature such as to be modified by the mixture relative to the hot and the cold, but to undergo nothing from that relative to the dry and wet? Far from it: we have many evidences of this, too, both in drugs and in everyday regime. Perhaps I should discuss these all next – after first giving a reminder of that statement of Plato's,

28 Dillon (2000), 339.

29 For Galen and the question of *ex nihilo* creation, see Brisson (2002); Calabi (2000); Tieleman (2005).

30 O'Brien (2015), 4.

31 Opsomer (2005b), 78n.143, in his otherwise invaluable study, states: "Galen follows Plato in attributing the fabrication of human bodies to lesser demiurges, the young gods … Whether he considers the demiurge to be the highest god is not clear (to me), but I tend to think he does not."

32 As cited in Chiaradonna (2014), 70.

> that as a result of the wetness of the body the soul reaches a state of forgetfulness of what it knew before being bound into the body. For this basically is what he says – in these very words – in the *Timaeus*, in that part of the work in which he states that the gods craft the human being by placing the immortal soul "in a body replete with ebb and flow". It is quite evident that this is an oblique reference to the wetness of the substance of infants.[33] (trans.) Singer

A passage from *De usu partium*, where the gods are compared to "certain bad workmen" (τινὰς φαύλους δημιουργοὺς) appears more promising from the point of view of Galen's adherence to Timaean *ipsissima verba*:

> And why did Aristotle, who was very clever at explaining the workmanship of Nature and so forth, overlook so much of their usefulness? [Plato] says that like certain bad workmen the gods who fashioned man made nails grow on his finger-tips, as if they were practicing in advance the formation of the claws that would be necessary in other animals.[34] (trans.) May

However, the relevant passage in *Timaeus* affirms that our creators "knew that many of these creatures would need nails for many practical purposes, and so they created rudimentary nails as soon as human beings came into existence." (76d–e) (trans.) Waterfield.

The lesser gods are hardly "practicing" here. This creative interpretation allows Galen not only to demonstrate his skill in elucidating the purpose of the fingernails, but also allows him to reiterate the essential difference between man and animal as seen in the hand: Plato regards the nails as potential claws and there remains the possibility that the human hand could lose its privileged instrumental status. Galen's reference to the young gods here interprets Plato's meaning in a new context for didactic purposes.[35] And there are indications that Galen is also interested in widening the definition of the Demiurge to directly account for the creation of human beings. In *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* (*PHP*), we note the following:

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33 4.42 Muller; IV.780K.

34 *UP* 1.8, III.16K; I.11–12 Helmreich.

35 So in *Commentary on the medical statements in the Timaeus*, fr.15 Larrain, the gods (οἱ θεοί), after assembling the body, hand it over to mind (νοῦς), ruler and source (ἡγεμών τε καὶ ἄρχων) of voluntary motion and perception. For Stoic influence here see Reydams-Schils (1999), 175–6.

> Therefore, just as we form judgements about human moulders, so we must also about the divine, and we must wonder at the Demiurge who fashioned our body, whichever god he is.[36] (trans.) De Lacy

Now one might suppose that "the demiurge that fashioned (ποιεῖσθαι) our body" *implies* the existence of the young gods, whose work is only possible thanks to the Demiurge. So, at one remove, he can be said to have created human beings. But if for Galen the Demiurge does function in this fashion *without* direct recourse to subordinate Timaean demiurgic entities, then *within* that conceptualisation the very qualities of matter may be said to act in a demiurgic-like way; that is to say, matter is not only capable of demiurgic manipulation, but is already pre-programmed to act as a creative force or as the sum of all ancillary demiurgic forces, so to speak. Galen brings this out in *On the elements according to Hippocrates*, regarding the four qualities:

> They alone, by altering the underlying substance, cause the elements to change into each other, and they are the craftsmen of plants and living creatures.[37] (trans.) De Lacy, slightly modified.

There are of course precedents to such comparisons,[38] and living beings (ζῷα) are assembled from the elements in the *Timaeus* (39e–40a).[39] Yet in Galen's hands, these elemental building blocks give him not so much a fruitful analogy as a reason to believe that matter has an active capacity, and is more than something passive to be manipulated (the Stoic view).[40]

At this point, we need to ask whether the Demiurge does essentially function as god for Galen. If so, and granted that Galen's Demiurge appropriates the tasks of the young gods, does Galen articulate anything like a Middle Platonic hierarchy of divinities? Contemporary Platonism offered him a range of possible influences, both attractive and unattractive.[41] The Pythagorean Numenius promoted a hierarchic splitting of divine authority, with the first god, equated

36 IX.8, V.789K; 596.5–7 De Lacy.

37 128,11–13 De Lacy; I.482K. Cf. 132.11 f.: [the qualities] are "the craftsmen of the elements" (τῶν στοιχείων δημιουργοί).

38 E.g. Pseudo-Archytas, *On principles*, 19.24–20.2 Thesleff, with the discussion in Bonazzi (2013b), 178.

39 Cf. Miller (2003), 40–41; Broadie (2012), chapter 6.

40 Calcidius 293 = Long and Sedley, 44E. Cf. SVF 2.311 = Long and Sedley 44A.

41 See Vorwerk (2010), 80–93, for an overview.

to a king being father of the second, the creator or demiurge.[42] This Demiurge is itself divided further.[43] In effect, Numenius postulated a divine triad, with the demiurge creating the third divinity, the cosmos or world soul.[44] Further, this Demiurge is "torn between his contemplation of the first god and its desire for matter."[45] Any notion of a Demiurge "tainted" through contact with matter[46] would have been rejected by Galen, for whom direct material interaction was one of the Demiurge's principal activities. Conversely, Atticus regarded the Demiurge as the highest god (Proclus, *In Tim.* I 305, 6 ff.) and as "intellect".[47] Like Plutarch and Apuleius he viewed this god as the highest principle, which is broadly in line with Galen's conception.[48]

If we take Galen's Demiurge as his highest principle (god and intellect), where does this leave the World Soul? In *De foetuum formatione*, Galen is clear that the World Soul does not have a creative function:

> One of my Platonist teachers (τῶν διδασκάλων τῶν Πλατωνικῶν) told me that the Soul that extends throughout the entire cosmos constructs (διαπλάττειν) the embryo; my reaction was that such skill (τέχνην) and power (δύναμιν) involved would be worthy of that entity, but I could not tolerate the conclusion that scorpions, venomous spiders, mice, mosquitoes, vipers, worms, helminths and ascarides were constructed by her, as such a doctrine verged, it seemed to me, on impiety (ἀσεβείας) … So only this do I myself believe able to said definitely regarding the cause of construction within living beings (τὰ ζῷα): that it involves an enormous degree of skill and wisdom (τέχνην τε καὶ σοφίαν).[49] (trans.) Singer, slightly modified.

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42 Fr. 12 des Places. Cf. fr.13, and Tarrant (1979); also Athanassiadi in this volume. As O'Brien (2015), 159, notes: "While Plato's Demiurge may order according to the Forms, he is still an autonomous demiurge, rather than simply an 'instrument' of a superior god, as is the case with Numenius' Second God."

43 Fr 16 des Places.

44 Cf. fr.11 des Places. See also Van den Berg (2005), 116–17.

45 Cox (2007), 42. Cf. fr.11, des Places. See also O'Brien (2015), 158–67.

46 As Dillon (2000), 340, notes (citing fr.12, des Places), "it is not fitting for the primal god 'to create' (δημιουργεῖν); rather, he is to be regarded as the father of the δημιουργός."

47 Fr.9, Des Places; cf. frr. 4 and 37 and the discussions in Dillon (1977), 254; idem (2006), 26–27; 254; Baltes (1983), 41 f. Deuse (1983), 54 n.26, claims that Galen can be used for reconstructing Atticus's views on the soul-intellect relationship; he seems to have been indebted to Atticus' lost *Timaeus* synopsis when crafting his own. Cf. Chiaradonna (2009), 245.

48 For Plutarch, he is the "highest (ἀνωτάτω) god" (*Platonic Questions*, 1000E). For Apuleius similarly, *De Plat.* 1.11.204. See Finamore (2006), 34–40, and Bonazzi and Roskam in this volume.

49 IV.700–701 K; 104.25–1065 Nickel.

Galen is not denying the existence of the World Soul, only its putative role in somatic creation. For him, the creation of lower life forms belongs rather to the realm of the Demiurge.[50] However, as he also states prior to the citation (IV. 700 K; 104,15–16 Nickel), Galen is aporetic regarding the cause of construction (τοῦ διαπλάσαντος αἰτίου) in the embryo: it is not the Platonic desiderative soul nor the Aristotelian vegetative soul, neither is it Stoic *phusis*.[51] Suffice that it is something of supreme intelligence and power.[52] This, however, does not exclude the Demiurge. Elsewhere (IV. 695 K; 98,25 Nickel) Galen states that the skill involved in construction of the parts of the body could not have come about "without a most wise and most powerful Demiurge". It is just that Galen cannot explain the nature of the identity of this craftsman. He calls on the "best philosophers" working on the matter to find the solution and then to share this knowledge.[53] Moreover, his uncertainty in *De foetuum formatione* concerning the exact nature of the creative being is again displayed in Book 9 of *PHP*, where Galen links it to the "likely account" in the *Timaeus*:

> But Plato declared that the cause that made us, the god who is the craftsman of the universe, commanded his children by speech to fashion the human race, receiving from him the substance of the immortal soul and inserting in it the part that is generated. But we must recognise this fact, that there is no similarity in kind between proving and positing (ἀποδείξεώς τε καὶ θέσεως) that we were made in accordance with the providence of some god or gods, and knowing the substance (οὐσίαν) of the maker, or even of our own soul. My earlier remarks made it clear that the fashioning of our bodies is a work of the highest wisdom and power; but the statements of the most divine Plato about the substance of the soul and of the gods who formed us, and still more all that he says about

50 As reiterated forcefully in *UP* 17.1, IV.360 K; I.447 Helmreich, the structure of any living thing "gives proof of a wise Demiurge" (ἔνδειξεν ἔχει σοφοῦ δημιουργοῦ).

51 In *De elementis*, Galen states that Nature (ἡ φύσις), being a good craftsman (ἀγαθὸς δημιουργὸς) first generates and constructs the embryo from the maternal blood (ἐκ τῆς μητρὸς αἵματος). I.495 K; 142.8–12 De Lacy.

52 Galen also allows for the possibility of more than one divine agency, although it is likely no more than a semantic distinction. At *De foetuum formatione* IV.688 K; 92.16–21 Nickel, Galen provides an interesting analogy with those who create theatrical effects: they design and set them in motion and then leave them to their devices. Similarly "the gods constructed" (κατασκευάσαντας τοὺς θεοὺς) the seeds of plants and animals so that thereafter they may function. Cf. Van der Eijk (2014), 123–4.

53 IV.695–6 K; 100.9–13 Nickel.

> our whole body, extend only to the point of being plausible and reasonable (τοῦ πιθανοῦ καὶ εἰκότος), as he himself pointed out in the *Timaeus* when first he was about to enter upon an account of the natural world, and again when he inserted the statement in the middle of the account.[54] (trans.) De Lacy

This frames Galen's agnosticism on matters such as the immortality of the soul and the generation of the cosmos, which fall outside practical philosophy, as noted above.[55] The passage also serves to emphasise another divine aspect of the Demiurge, that of *providence* (πρόνοια). This reflects the Middle Platonic narrowing of Plato's notion of providence to *divine providence* (θεοῦ πρόνοια) in particular.[56] *De usu partium*, in particular, is replete with references to the providence of the Demiurge.[57]

Galen's disregard of (or lack of a need for) Platonic metaphysics leads to a consideration of the *Synopsis of the Timaeus*.[58] In the *Synopsis*, Galen deliberately enhances the role of the Demiurge at the expense of the account in the *Timaeus*. "These changes", Das has noted, "add further emphasis to the monotheistic reading of the dialogue."[59] To be sure, *emendations* to the text of the *Timaeus* itself have a long history.[60] But here Galen is elaborating a set of modifications to the *interpretation* of the text.[61] First, he refers to the Demiurge constructing the world not with reference to the eternal cosmic Paradigm, but to a more general aim or goal (*garad*, σκοπός).[62] The notion that the cosmos is

54 *PHP* V.791–2 K; 596.30–598.11 De Lacy.

55 See n.13 above.

56 See Dragona-Monachou (1994), especially 4453–75.

57 To cite one example, the insertion of the ureters into the bladder and the ducts into the gall bladder show the Demiurge's wisdom (σοφίας) and providence (προνοίας). *UP* 5, III.391K; I.286 Helmreich.

58 See here Das (2013), 79–80. There are also Arabic fragments from Galen's *Republic* and *Phaedo* synopses (cf. 49 n.21), and one fragment of the *Laws* synopsis. Cf. Gutas (1997), 116–19. (I am most grateful to Aileen Das for allowing me to quote from her dissertation; a revised text with translation and commentary is in preparation).

59 Das (2013), 81, who adds: "it is not necessary to assume that the modifications to the theology of the Synopsis are entirely the work of the Arabic translator … this adaptation of Plato's cosmology actually corresponds to Galen's own concept of a provident creator god, and was therefore likely to be present in his exegesis."

60 Dillon (1989).

61 Whether Galen, as Baltes (1976), 63–65, argues, was influenced by Atticus' own *Timaeus* exegesis, is moot. Cf. n.47, above.

62 Das (2013), 82–83 (Arabic text, 5, II.4–6 Kraus-Walzer).

the product of providential design is thereby highlighted. The ordering by Necessity (ἀνάγκη) of the pre-cosmic state of disordered matter (*Tim.* 47e–48e), independent of the Demiurge, is reworked by Galen to claim that Necessity and Intellect (qua Demiurge) work together. Moreover, Intellect is afforded a privileged role as it "holds sway" over Necessity.[63] In so doing, Galen presents "a more linear account of the origins of the cosmos, and gives the impression that everything builds up to the creation of man."[64] The Receptacle (ὑποδοχή) is also refashioned to stand as the material substrate (in the sense of ὕλην κοινή)[65] common to the elements.[66] It is "the mother and nurse of Being." The Demiurge is referred to as "the thing [that] was placed from the beginning … compared to a father. For this reason, the world arose and was born from matter and form."[67] Das summarises these changes as follows:

> […] the figures of the Demiurge and the Paradigm are not distinguished from each other; the plan (σκοπός) according to which the universe is created is subsumed within the figure of the Demiurge … who, rather than being as creator *ex nihilo*, takes pre-existing matter and gives it form in the likeness of himself. Thus, Galen appears to adopt Plato's analogy, which is used to refer to the generative processes occurring during the pre-cosmic period of chaos, to fit into his account of the formation of the universe by an intelligent creator god.[68]

Allowing for the fact that the translation was addressing a monotheistic audience, the *Synopsis* is structured to give the deliberative impression that *all* of material ordering stems from the Demiurge. It is then no great step to have such an entity create all life without divine assistants. And what comes across clearly here is Galen's persistence with a two-principal distinction of god and matter. This dualism, while not unprecedented,[69] is opposed by Platonists such

63 Das (2013), 86 (Arabic text 12, II.10–16 Kraus-Walzer).

64 Das (2013), 87.

65 An Aristotelian concept adopted by a number of Platonists. Cf. Das (2013), 90 n.111.

66 The Stoics also dismissed the Receptacle, and regarded the *nous* of the World Soul and the Demiurge as identical, with the Demiurge incorporated into the Stoic *logos*. Cf., Scade (2010), 163–7; O'Brien (2012); Powers (2013).

67 Das (2013), 89 (Arabic text 13. II.1–4 Kraus-Walzer).

68 Das (2013), 92–93. Timaeus describes the Receptacle as not only "difficult and indistinct" (χαλεπὸν καὶ ἀμυδρόν, 49a), but its method of operation is also "hard to explain and marvellous" (δύσφραστον καὶ θαυμαστόν, 50c). See Sayre (2003), for an overview.

69 D.L. 3.69; Dörrie-Baltes (1995), 119.2. Apart from such doxographies, only Philo of Alexandria seems to have elaborated a two-principal thesis. See Runia (2003), 103.

as Alcinous who cleaved to what they would have regarded as the more "orthodox" triune principle of god-ideas-matter.[70] Galen's notion of god (*qua* Demiurge) directly working on matter is best seen in *De usu partium*, a text offering a thorough appreciation of how these principles are enjoined.

III

Galen's adoption of the Platonic *Demiurge* as the constructing agency for the body is one of the most distinctive features of this magisterial work. Galen refers to the Demiurge by name some seventy four times in this work of seventeen books.[71] In its penultimate volume, Galen reflects that nothing has been neglected "by the Demiurge of living things".[72] *De usu partium* is where Galen comprehensively extends the role of the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* to account for every part of the construction of living beings. In Book 1, which sets the characteristic terms for Galen's argument, he speaks of the "marvellous wisdom (θαυμαστὴν σοφίαν) of the demiurge" in the musculo-tendinous insertions of the fingers. Here we note the explicit linkage of wisdom with construction (κατασκευή), as part of the Demiurge's mode of operation.[73] The Galenic Demiurge constructs as best he can, being under the same material restraints as in the *Timaeus*, and with an eye to the logic of each structure under consideration and its relationship to others.[74]

70 Alcinous, *Did.* 9.1 and the commentary in Dillon (1993), 93–96.

71 Nature (*phusis* or equivalent pronoun) is referred to some nine hundred times, and does exactly what the Demiurge also performs. Cf. Senzasono (1996), 58–60, 77. Galen is not using Nature as the Demiurge's "Handwerksmeister", as Kovacic (2001), 212, asserts. Rather, he is committed to exploiting an Aristotelian methodology that involves an equivalence between *phusis* and *technê*, of a demiurgic nature (*De Partibus Animalium* 645a9; cf. 659b35, where it is depicted as a divine entity), a creative innate power (*Phys.* 192b8–23). Showing also Stoic imprints (*SVF* I.157, 176), *De usu partium* is in debt to Aristotelian and Stoic influence (cf. Vegetti 2015), though Galen's "Demiurge-Nature" denies the Stoic priority of nature, for "Galen thinks that what happens naturally … is ultimately the work of the Demiurge. And this Demiurge is not some abstract principle." Frede (2003), 105. Galen also appeals to Erasistratus for the notion of a provident *phusis* that exhibits expert *technê*. Cf. von Staden (2007), 38. The opposite is true in Plato's *Sph.* 265e where things are *either* brought into being by god's craftsmanship, *or* by nature acting through some self-acting cause without thought-processes.

72 16.10, IV.316–7K; II.415 Helmreich.

73 *UP* 1.18, III.65K; I.47–8 Helmreich.

74 E.g. *UP* 2.8, III.121K; I.88 Helmreich, where the apparent discrepancy in the number of bones of the limbs is explained as ultimately the best rational fit possible.

The theological aspect to Galen's use of the Demiurge is well brought out in a passage from *De usu partium* Book 3, which deals with the muscles of the lower limb.[75] Galen begins with a rhetorical assault on those who deviate from the adherents of Plato and Hippocrates, who "admire the works of Nature". Such a person is one who not only ruins the best part of his soul (a further nod to Plato), but also "cripples" and "blinds" the "god-like faculty" by which we "view the truth". Galen now ceases his diatribe on the grounds that "right-thinking men" will censure him for "desecrating the sacred discourse" that he is composing as a true hymn (ὕμνον ἀληθινὸν) lauding him who crafted us (δημιουργήσαντος). The correct respect (εὐσέβειαν) to the Demiurge is shown not by sacrificial offerings, but by understanding his wisdom, power, and goodness (χρηστότητα), and passing on this knowledge to others. Galen's cascade of nouns to describe these three key attributes of the Demiurge reflects a Middle Platonic commentary tradition.[76] Galen concludes by remarking that "the order" of the components of the body, in the best way possible, is proof (δεῖγμα) of "the perfect goodness" of the Demiurge.[77] In discovering the nature of such "ordering" we exhibit the "height of wisdom" (ἄκρας σοφίας). Under cover of an ostensible rhetorical discourse, Galen introduces the remarkable notion that his work devoted to functional anatomy is in fact a sacred discourse, offered as a meaningful hymn of praise to the Demiurge.[78] This is fully in accord with the theological tenor with which Middle Platonism was infused.

The technical skill and craftsmanship of the Demiurge, repeatedly stressed by Galen, is another well-explored Platonic theme. In *UP* Book 3, motifs from the architectural world are imported for comparative purposes. In Book 3, attention is explicitly drawn to those parts of a building that play an essential supporting role, and this is used to reinforce the fittingness of bodily structure.[79] Structural metaphors are not surprising from the son of an architect,[80] and the notion of the Demiurge *qua* builder has precedents in the *Timaeus* (28c, 30b, 68e–f) and in Stoic construction metaphors for

75 *UP* 3.10, III.236–38K; I.173–4 Helmreich.

76 Whittaker (1992), for the fundamental study. Runia (2003), 104–105, perhaps pushes the evidence too far in including Philo of Alexandria as a proponent of this triad.

77 This has obvious Platonic antecedents, especially with *Phd*.

78 Cf. Porphyry, *To Gaurus on how embryos are ensouled* (48,1K/10.6.5), who mentions other "sacred books" (*hierai bibloi*) which he is prepared to write regarding the blending of the developing parts. Critically, "Ancient authors regard texts titled *hieroi logoi* as a highly exclusive and profoundly arcane form of sacred discourse." Henrichs (2003), 210.

79 *UP* 3.13, III. 248 K; I.182 Helmreich.

80 Cf. *Lib. Propr*. XIX. 59 K; 88 Müller; *Thras*., V. 891 K.

Nature.[81] Middle Platonists such as Atticus (frr. 4, 12, 13, des Places) and Apuleius (*De Plat.* 194; *Calc.* 137, 337, 343), describe God as builder or architect. But the most elaborated of architectonic metaphors is found in Philo of Alexandria, who like Galen was "an eclectic, but with a clear rationale and a strong leaning toward Platonism."[82] To Philo, the examination of the parts of a well-built city, the structure of a ship, and other smaller or greater constructions, all furnish evidence that such things could not have occurred without the skill of the craftsman (*LA* III 98). The construction analogies are derived from the *Timaeus*, but as Runia has noted: "In Philo's image the function of δημιουργός is emphatically retained, but at the same time the creating God has been promoted to an architect, or in more modern terms, a town planner."[83] It would be too much to state that Galen is influenced by Philo.[84] Yet the two share a certain similarity regarding the role of the divine power in creation and in what they see as its Platonic imprimatur.[85]

81 And with a predicable response by the Epicurean Velleius (Cicero, *De Nat. De.* 1.19)

82 Runia (2012), 44; (1992), 11.

83 Runia (1986), 168. As Runia further notes: "I am sure it would be mistaken to conclude that he (sc. Philo) has merely lifted it from a Platonist treatise or commentary. The image is tailor-made to fit the requirements of Philo's own exegetical and philosophical concerns. I am prepared to credit him with a considerable measure of originality and philosophical competence in its conception and composition." 169. For Philo's depiction of the Demiurge in the role of an architect, cf. *Opif.* 17–20. On the city of Alexandria as a source of inspiration for Philo's rationally-planned noetic cosmos, see Runia (2003), 96–98. For a different approach to the role of the Philonic demiurge, see Leonhardt-Balzer (2004), 330.

84 Radice (1989) has sought to show Galen indebted to Philo in the discussion of Mosaic creation in *UP* book 11. Calabi (2008), 219–21, remarks that "historically speaking, it is possible that Galen knew Philo, which does not however necessarily imply that in *De usu partium* he was referring to Philo's theories." (229) But the issue may not be as clear-cut. Galen spent four years in Alexandria, and was remarkably reticent as to what he did there. Of course, it has been conventional to assume this period was marked by a comprehensive study of the Hellenistic medical canon, as laid down by Herophilus and Erasistratus. But one might assume that Galen also attempted to slake his philosophical thirst in Alexandria. On Galen in Egypt, see Nutton (1993).

85 As Runia remarks: "Philo is eager to take over the Platonist conception of divine transcendence, but not at the cost of separating God from the cosmos and denying him the role of creatorship." (2003), 100.

IV

Galen, in common with strands of Middle Platonic thought, held the Demiurge to be the intelligent first principle.[86] This also fits the broad theological flavour with which Middle Platonism was infused. But the Demiurge is presented in *De usu partium* as one who, by working directly on the material fabric of creation, also exercises power in an immanent fashion. The tension of a transcendental being handling recalcitrant matter is a well-known story in Platonism. Galen simply ignores the metaphysical ramifications and proceeds to give an account of a demiurge that constructs living things, and whose handiwork is revealed even by mere consideration of the surface of the body:

> Who could be so stupid, then, or could there be anyone so hostile and antagonistic to the works of Nature as not to recognize immediately, from the skin first of all, the skill of the Demiurge? Who would not straightway conclude that some intelligence possessed of marvellous power (νοῦν τινα δύναμιν ἔχοντα θαυμαστὴν) was walking the earth and penetrating its every part? For you see everywhere that the animals produced all have a marvellous structure. (trans.) May (1968), 729–30.[87]

In *UP*, Book 17 (II.447–8 H; IV.360–1 K), Galen states that anyone who has an open mind may see that in the mud (βορβόρῳ)[88] from which living things are formed, the intelligence therein. The structure of any animal is proof of the wise Demiurge (ἔνδειξιν ἔχει σοφοῦ δημιουργοῦ). The contemplation of the microcosmic allows us to understand the macrocosmic, the intelligence in the heavens. This comparison is then used by Galen to position his own work on bodily parts in theological terms: that such work of seemingly little importance is really the principle (ἀρχή) of a perfect theology (θεολογίας ἀκριβοῦς).[89] As such, it outranks

86 Galen, *Temperamentis* I.567 K; 36, Helmreich, speaks of "another, more divine, principle from above" (τάχα δέ τινα θειοτέραν ἀρχὴν ἑτέραν ἐχούσης ἄνωθεν) which may also be a factor other than the right mixture of elements in forming a "well-fleshed" man (cf. I.656 K; 79 Helmreich: ποτ᾽ ἄρα θειοτέρας τινὸς ἀρχῆς). That Galen is arguing for Demiurgic causation is more than plausible. See the discussion in Van der Eijk (2014), 113–23.

87 *UP* 17.1, IV 358 K; II.446 Helmreich.

88 Possibly a reference to *Phd.* 69c–d, where it is said that those who created the institution of initiation, expressed philosophic truth in the guise of a riddle by saying that, "he who arrives in Hades uninitiated and unadmited to the mysteries will lie in mud, whereas he that arrives initiated and purified will dwell with the gods."

89 See Frede (2002), 107–11.

the art of medicine, and is useful not only for the doctor but for the philosopher eager to understand the whole of Nature.[90] Pushing the theological theme, Galen now invokes the Mysteries of Eleusis and Samothrace,[91] stating all who honour the gods (τιμῶσι θεούς) should be initiated (τελεῖσθαι) into his work; for in the mysteries revelation (ἔνδειξιν) is dim compared to Nature's revelations, which are manifest in all life forms.[92]

Fittingly, Galen closes *De usu partium* by referring to its last book-chapter as being like a good *epode* (ἐπωδός) performed by lyric poets singing hymns to the gods at the altar. The seventeen books of *De usu partium* constitute a true hymn of praise to our Demiurge,[93] and his "holy account". This invocation to the gods recalls the proœmium of the *Timaeus*, as it was perhaps meant to do.[94] Two centuries after Galen, Simplicius, last of the Platonists, in his commentary on Aristotle's *De caelo*, ends his scientific exegesis in similarly religious terms, making clear that the work now completed is offered as a hymn to the "Lord and Creator of the whole universe and of the simple bodies within it."[95]

V Conclusion

Galen's handling of Plato's concept of the Demiurge is not just one example of a way in which Platonism was used and interpreted in the Roman imperial era. For all his creativity Galen, like many Platonists, believed that he could read and understand Plato directly, without mediation. However, he parts company with Platonism in what the Demiurge does. For him, the role of the Demiurge is extended (and by Galen's lights strengthened), as intermediaries are reduced or eliminated. Galen's Demiurge is directly involved in the fabric of

90 "Galen does seem to think of theology as a philosophical discipline, a discipline one will pursue if one tries to understand the whole of nature." Frede (2003), 85.

91 Cf. 3.10, III.240 K; I.176 Helmreich; 3.10, III.241 K; I.177 Helmreich; 17.1, IV.361–2 K; II.448–9 Helmreich. On the Eleusinian and Samothracian Mysteries, the literature is substantial. See for example, Bremmer (2014), chapter 1; Clinton (2003). Mylonas (1961) remains valuable.

92 Theon compares philosophy to a sacred rite, as does Plutarch; see Roskam (2001).

93 *UP* 17.3, IV.366 K; II.451, Helmreich, where Galen remarks on the "hymns to the gods" (ὑμνοῦντες τοὺς θεούς) chanted at the altar. The role of the hierophant, it needs no reminding, is to make sacred things manifest to the initiates – since this is the *telos* of the entire series of rites. He does so by exercise of his *technê*, much as a physician does. On the διακόνου τέχνη, see Mikalson (2010), 101–109.

94 On the *Proœmium*, see Runia (1997).

95 731.25–26 Heiberg; (trans.) Hoffmann (2010), 112.

somatic creation. The strategy behind this manoeuvre is to firmly anchor the craftsman with his creation. For Galen, it offers the best way of showing that the organisation of the matter of living things is a deliberative and purposeful construct by a supremely rational entity.[96] There is no doubt that the creator divinity of Galen's found favour in an increasingly monotheistic thought-world. It could be made to merge almost seamlessly with the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But no pagan physician or philosopher made the leap Galen did, and put the deity in direct charge of fabricating living things. Galen also seeks to demonstrate that matter, in and of itself, has no propensity for evil, nor is the shaping agency. Whether one can also infer from this that Galen is reacting to the handling of the demiurgic concept in "Gnosticism" (or "biblical demiurgical traditions")[97] cannot be discussed here. Galen's Demiurge remains rooted in Platonic teleology and theology, adapted to deal with epistemological problems that arose from investigating the structure and function of the body.

96 A good example of this for a doctor such as Galen is *Tim.* 75b, where the Demiurge deliberates before choosing a bony rather than fleshy skull since the former will promote rational capacity albeit at the expense of potential longevity.

97 Williams (1996), 51. The degree to which "Gnosticism" was influenced by the Platonist concept of the demiurge is also open to question. Cf. Thomassen (1993).

CHAPTER 13

Variations of Receptions of Plato during the Second Sophistic[1]

Ryan C. Fowler

Instances of Plato's name, reference to his ideas, and quotations from his dialogues can be found throughout texts written during the first few centuries of the Common Era,[2] a period of time referred to in some studies as the Second Sophistic.[3] While interest in Plato and his ideas had remained fairly consistent after his death, reference to Plato in the literature of this time period actually increases around the time of Antiochus of Ascalon's move away from the skepticism of the New Academy in the early first century BCE.[4] Plato's presence becomes far-reaching by the first century CE, and subsequently explodes during the second and early third centuries. Platonic invocations can be found in the work of scholars interested in math and medicine, lexicographers and grammarians, and some of the early Christian apologists, as well as a number of authors who, because of the breadth of their work, defy easy categorization. This last relatively disparate group exemplifies responses to Plato and the dialogues during the this time period: in

1 I should like to thank the editors for perspicacious emendations and suggestions; thanks also to Amy Singer for her always helpful editorial eye.

2 Householder (1941), 44 provides a table based on the works of "14 Authors of Imperial Date" (i.e., Aelian, Marcus Aurelius, Scholia on Aristophanes, Athenaeus, Demetrius, Dio Chrysostom, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Longinus, Lucian, Maximum [Maximus of Tyre?], Pausanius, Plutarch, Julius Pollux, *Rhetores Graeci* [Spengel], and Lucian), which shows Plato second only to Homer in frequency of quotation or allusion (Euripides is listed third). For instances of the popularity of Plato during the second century, see De Lacy (1974), Trapp (1990), Anderson (1993), 173, and Boys-Stones (2001), 149.

3 I use the term "Second Sophistic" here to indicate a time period – spanning from the early first century into the third century CE (the edges of the period are somewhat blurred) – in which there was an engagement with and reaction to the language, rhetoric, oratory, and philosophy of the classical Greek past. On the Second Sophistic, cf. Bowersock (1969), Anderson (1993), and Whitmarsh (2001) and (2005). Further, Plato's authority in literary circles during the Second Sophistic seems to be paralleled by a growth in Plato's authority among philosophers; on the philosophical authority of Plato, cf. Dillon (1977), Sedley (1997), Boys-Stones (2001), esp. 99–122, Tarrant and Baltzly (2006), and Sharples and Sorabji (2007).

4 Cf. Tarrant (1985) and (1993).

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general, the types of texts produced during the Second Sophistic are, among other things, wide-ranging and diverse, and the receptions of Plato we have during this time reflect this aggregative, if not to say eclectic, literature.

A number of authors during the Second Sophistic clearly signpost or even label their uses of Plato's ideas and expressions. Sometimes what might seem a verbal echo of Plato could be part of a sentence or even be comprised by just one or two words from a dialogue; given the interest in displaying one's erudition during the time period, that degree of allusiveness may sometimes have been the point.[5] It is tempting to look for Plato everywhere during this time period, primarily because these texts seem to be replete with echoes of the Platonic dialogues themselves, as well as the ideas that came out of the Middle Platonic scholarship around the same time. As a result, to study the impact of Plato on the literature in the early centuries of the Common Era is to confront problematic terms such as "inspiration" and "allusion", "confrontation" and "correction," and "authority" and "appropriation", among other slippery ideas included under the umbrella term "influence."

There are a number of expressions and images from Plato that take on lives of their own during the Second Sophistic and beyond. The phrase "assimilation to god as much as possible" (*homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton*), which is found at *Theaetetus* 176b1–2, is an important formula that plays a role as man's *telos* in both Middle Platonic and early Christian texts, and can be found around this time period among wide range of authors: e.g., Philo, Arius Didymus, Galen, Justin, Alcinous, Apuleius, Iranaeus, Albinus, Theon, Clement, Hippolytus, Origen and Plotinus.[6] And this goal, in turn, is related to the Platonic goals of "following God" and of seeing God or the gods.[7] For the Christian apologist Justin Martyr, the aim of Plato's philosophy is to behold God directly, just as it is for the Greek Platonic sophist Maximus of Tyre (both are discussed further,

5 Cf. De Lacy (1974), 6. On the *pepaideuomenos* ("cultivated man") as author and member of the ideal audience, cf. Anderson (1989).

6 Philo, *Opif.* 69.1, et al.; Arius Didymus in Stobaeus 59, 1.15; Galen, *Aff. Dig.* 5.11.6 Kühn; Justin: fr. 17.2 Otto; Alcinous, *Did.* 28.1; Apuleius, *De Plat.* 2.23; Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1.10.33; Theon, *Expos.* 15.20; Clement, *Strom.* 2.19.100.2.3; Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 1.19.17.2; Origen, *Homiliae in Lucam* 39.220.7; Plotinus, *Enn.* I 2.4.28. For a discussion of this formula, cf. Sedley (1999a).

7 Following god: cf. *Phdr.* 248b: "… that [soul] which is best follows after God and is most like him (ἡ μὲν ἄριστα θεῷ ἑπομένη καὶ εἰκασμένη)"; and 252c: "Now he who is a follower of Zeus, when seized by love can bear a heavier burden of the winged god," et al. (trans.) Fowler (1914–1925). The idea is found in Apuleius *De Plat.* 2.23: "We call the wise man a "follower" and "imitator of God," because we believe him to be following after God; that is, indeed [the meaning of the words]: "Follow God" [ἕπου θεῷ]." (my translation).

below),[8] as well as for the scholastic Platonist Albinus, for whom "to be assimilated to the gods" is identified with "seeing them with complete clarity".[9]

Plato's Chariot Allegory (*Phaedrus* 246a–254e) and the imagery around it is another example of a widely used echo, and is found in a large number of authors during the Second Sophistic: e.g., Plutarch, Dio, Hermogenes, Alcinous, Aristides, Lucian, Galen, Maximus of Tyre, Clement, Menander Rhetor, Philostratus, and others.[10] In fact, nearly all of the *Phaedrus* can be considered one of the most referenced and quoted texts in the second century (apart from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), between its theological imagery, discussions of love and madness, and its themes of writing and philosophical rhetoric.[11]

Finally, Platonic echoes during the Second Sophistic can also be compact: the idea of man as "a plaything of God" (*theou ti paignion*)[12] can be found in the work of the sophist Philostratus, the early Christian Clement,[13] as well as other authors such as the Jewish scholar Philo, the Greek Sophist Aristides, and the early Christian apologist Origen.

What follows below is a sample of the variety of authors who engage with Plato during the Second Sophistic, sometimes by reacting to his ideas, or, more often, by appropriating his language and phrases into their own works.

I The Greek Philosopher-Sophist Dio

Dio of Prusa (or Cocceianus, or *Chrysostom* ["golden-mouthed"]) (c. 40–c. 115 CE), was a leading Greek orator, writer, philosopher, and historian during the first century of the Roman Empire; approximately seventy-six of his essays and speeches survive. Throughout his corpus he shows an interest in the legacy of classical culture, as well as in the related expression of the complications

8 Cf. Justin Martyr *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 2.6 and Maximus *Dissertatio* 11.10–12.

9 5.27: ὁμοιωθῆναι αὐτοῖς; 5.29: αντ<ικρυ> οψομεθα τα θεια εναργως (follows the text of Reis 1999). See the god: cf. *Phdr.* 246, *Rep.* VI 508d, et al. Note also that in Arius Dydimus in Stobaeus 2.49.23–25, attention is brought to *Leg.* 715e–718c. In the fourth book of the *Laws* there is discussion of the soul's goal as following God (716c), as well as the idea of becoming like god (716c–d). Also cf. *Rep.* 613a–c.

10 A complete list can found at Trapp (1990), 172; cf. Trapp's work for a complete discussion of this dialogue during the Second Sophistic.

11 Cf. Trapp (1990).

12 Cf. *Leg.* 7.803c; also *Leg.* 644d.

13 Cf. Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 4.36 and Clement, *Strom.* 7.5.

for Hellenism within the Roman Empire.[14] In his work on the lives of a number of Second Sophistic authors, Philostratus tells us that Dio excelled in "all areas",[15] and that his prose echoed that of Demosthenes and Plato, though he had his own style.[16] Dio tackles topics as varied as kingship (in four orations addressed to Trajan) and living a life according to nature (in four orations on the character of Diogenes of Sinope); in addition, he wrote essays on slavery and freedom, and some on the means of attaining eminence as an orator. Dio also wrote a number of political discourses addressed to various towns, as well as works on ethical and philosophical subjects, and, though he was as not interested in presenting himself as a careful scholar, can be connected in this way to Plutarch. In the tradition of the orators of the time period, Dio also penned a number of orations on mythical subjects and display speeches. As a result of this variety of themes and styles, division between Dio the sophist and Dio the philosopher, as with many of the authors considered below, is not clear-cut.

Dio's engagement with Plato, which at times resembles emulation and at others seems to entail correction (or at least divergence), is by and large allusive. Plato's name occurs only five times in the seventy-six works; however, Plato's various stylistic registers, literary structures, and philosophical and literary tropes can be found in the background of much of his work. Dio references perhaps sixteen or so Platonic dialogues in his corpus; in particular, *Gorgias*, *Clitophon*, *Alcibades I*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Republic* all garner substantive use.[17]

One of Dio's most Platonically inspired works is the so-called *Borysthenitic Discourse* (*Orations* 36). The oration recalls an exchange with those living in the edge of the Black Sea who love Homer and some others ("not many") who love Plato. Throughout the oration, Homer, his language, and his poetic themes are a constant presence; at the same time, there is much in it that is Platonic. In the narrator's first speech, Dio describes the constellations as gods "dancing a dance of happiness coupled with wisdom and supreme intelligence." This description of the heavens can be found in a number of texts,[18] but is common to Plato (especially in *Epinomis* 982e and *Timaeus* 40c). A stronger reason to connect this image explicitly to Plato, however, is found later in the longer,

14 Swain (2000), 1.

15 *vs* 7.

16 *vs* 487.

17 Trapp (2000), 235.

18 A contemporaneous example would be Lucian, *de Saltatione* 7.

second speech (sections 29–60). In this second speech, Dio presents the same general theme of the organization of the heavens, but in an altered form: that is, as presented as a myth of the Magi. In the myth, the universe is described as a four-horse team yoked to the chariot of Zeus, a distinctive echo of the chariot ride through the heavens described in the *Phaedrus* (246a–254e). This allusion is further resolved later in the second speech into an even clearer Platonic formulation (54): "For they say that now by this time it is simply the soul of the charioteer and master; or, let us say, merely the intellect and leadership of that soul." The connection of the soul to the chariot would have concretized the allusion to Plato for Dio's audience.

Many more connections can be made between Dio and Plato in this oration.[19] Dio mentions Plato by name, as well as his "nobility of expression," a reference back to the first speech, which can be read as a veiled criticism of the project in Plato's *Republic*: imagining a good mortal city made up of entirely good elements.[20] Because of this Platonic invocation, however, Dio is asked by his audience to pass over a discussion of the mortal city (perhaps from the *Republic* or the *Laws*), and instead to discuss the divine city he mentioned in passing, which leads, as we saw above, to the chariot image.

In a narrative sense, moreover, the entire oration is itself rife with Platonic echoes and allusions. The discourse is presented as the first-person recollection and narration of a dialogue (as very often in Plato's dialogues, for example, in the *Charmides, Lysis*, *Protagoras*, and, notably, the *Republic*). The location of the speech is a nod to the opening of the *Phaedrus*, that is, the start of a discussion outside of the walls of the city (7; *Phaedrus* 227a–230e), close to noon (1; *Phaedrus* 242a). Themes and narrative elements are also similar throughout: there is an evaluation of good and bad poets (10–11; *Phaedrus* 230d–237a); a well-turned speech is interrupted (24; *Phaedrus* 241d–242d); and poetic inspiration is invoked at the start of the second of two speeches (28–29; *Phaedrus* 256e–257c). Therefore, while within the speeches themselves we find a mixture of Stoicism,[21] and Hesiodic and Homeric allusions and

19 For a number of the connections mentioned here (and many more besides), as well as a full discussion of the uses of Plato in the works of Dio, cf. Trapp (2000).

20 *Or.* 22: "For no one knows of a good city made wholly of good elements as having existed in the past, that is, a city of mortal men, nor is it worthwhile to conceive of such a city as possibly arising in the future…", (trans.) Cohoon and Crosby (1940).

21 cf. *Or.* 20, and especially *Or.* 29: "*our sect* is not literally defining the universe as a city"; also cf. 48.

quotations,[22] among other possible references,[23] the stylistic and literary model for this oration is Plato. It may be that this Platonic connection is most clear in Dio's use of myth in the second speech, in which a metaphysical explanation is couched within a "foreign myth", itself a common Platonic trope.[24]

In this way, Dio's use of Plato ranges from a subtle reference – comprised of a short phrase[25] or nod to an image, for example the Chariot of the Soul, both of which would surely spark a moment of familiarity in his audience – to broader invocations of Platonic style. The second type may even include the use of the dialogic structure, which was a form very often directly connected to Plato during the second sophistic, even though he was not the only classical author to use it.[26] There are other instances that might only remain possible connections.[27] But because he was intent on asserting his knowledge of Greek and Greek culture, many of Dio's Platonic invocations seem to be done in the interest in providing support for his own philosophical status. In *Oratio* 36, when he presents his audience as giving him the authority he desires as an orator, he provides an example of his own success. (14): "My friend, we admire and respect you greatly; for otherwise no man in Borysthenes would have tolerated your saying such things of Homer and Achilles …"[28]

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22 Hesiodic: 33 (*Theogony* 99–101), 35 (*Theogony* 22–34); Homeric: cf. 13 (*Iliad* 18.228–9), 14 (*Iliad* 4.362–3), 28 (*Odyssey* 8.223), 60 (*Iliad* 21.389–90).

23 36: οἶκον … τοῦ Διὸς may be a reference to Euripides calling the aether "the home of Zeus" (fr. 487: ἱερὸν αἰθέρ', οἴκησιν Διός); cf. Cohoon and Crosby (1940), 453.

24 One of the most notable is the "Egyptian myth" about writing in *Phdr.* 274c–275e, which is something Socrates "heard" (ἀκοή). There is also in the same dialogue the "myth" (or extended analogy) of the winged soul (246a–249d), and the myth about Boreas at the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, which is called both a *muthologēma* (229c5) and a *logos* (d2). For various uses of myth in Plato, cf. Dillon (2004), Partenie (2009), and Most (2012), as well as Collobert, Destrée, and Gonzalez (2012).

25 E.g, a small reference to the universe being (30) "a living creature (εἶναι τὸν κόσμον ζῷον)"; cf. *Tim.* 30b.

26 Cf. Lucian's *Bis Accusatus sive Tribunalia*, discussed below. On this topic, cf. e.g., Trapp (1990) and (1994); Anderson (1993), 66–67; Harrison (2000), 255.

27 For example, is the sigh at the start of the second speech, given at that moment in which the narrator thinks of Plato and Homer, simply a sigh to steady himself at the start of a long speech, or is it a reference to Plato's treatment of Homer in the *Republic*? Or, is the reference to Callistratus, who, like Phaedrus, was "interested also in oratory and philosophy" (8), "having drawn his arm beneath his mantle" (7), a sign of *politeness* (per Cohoon and Crosby (1940), n.3) or a reference to Phaedrus' covered, grasping left hand at the start of Plato's dialogue?

28 Cf. also 16, 25, *et al.*

Dio is an early model for a number of authors during the Second Sophistic. Given his interest in oration and rhetorical display alongside his philosophical persona, we might view Dio as similar to the Platonic rhetor Maximus of Tyre (though perhaps with more control over his rhetorical flourish).[29] With his emphasis on the philosophical life and general criticism of sophistry, and with his use of the great Greek past to guide and correct current depraved behaviors, Dio can also be seen to have these things in common with Plutarch.[30] And with his chameleonic abilities to move fluidly between his philosophical persona and sophistic displays, he is a forerunner to the Latin sophist Apuleius. Therefore, at the very start of the Second Sophistic, a period of renaissance of classical Greek themes and styles of oratory, Dio takes a relatively unPlatonic vehicle and gives it a subtle and allusive Platonic flavor, anticipating a number of styles of authors and orators to come. If in fact the full impact of Plato on the Second Sophistic would not be felt until the second century, Dio, and his contemporary, Plutarch, can be thought of as at the very forefront of this movement. So, given his interest in invoking the great Greek past in as many interesting and clever ways as possible, how could Dio *not* engage to some extent with Plato, who is, as he writes, the interlocutor from Borysthenes explains, "the man who is the most Greek and most wise (*malista tōi hellēnikōtatōi kai sophōtatōi*)"?

II The Literary Philosopher: Plutarch

Plutarch of Chaeronea (45/46–120 CE) was a Greek historian, biographer and essayist, known primarily for his *Parallel Lives*, a number of non-philosophical essays, and his lengthy *Moralia*. He is often discussed today not only as a Middle Platonist, as by Bonazzi in this volume, but also as one of the most important sources of evidence for the development of Middle Platonism in the first century. Plutarch's engagement with Plato, however, is more involved than that of those who wrote straightforward commentary on particular Platonic dialogues, and, given his general scholastic Platonist interests, and his criticism and avoidance of sophistic display,[31] to call him a sophist would miss

29 cf. Trapp (1997), XVI–LV.

30 cf. Hawley (2000), 130–31; Salmeri (2000), 84–85.

31 Cf. De tuenda sanitate praecepta (e.g., 131a). Some of these so-called anti-sophistic comments have been thought of either as morally based (i.e. they exhibited a competitiveness and ambition he disliked in the burgeoning sophists in the Asiatic mainland, cf. Schmitz (2014)), or that they exhibited professional envy (Plutarch couldn't successfully compete in that area, cf. Russell (1973), 7 and n.19).

the mark. The range of the topics he wrote about and his ability to combine philosophical and literary interests leaves Plutarch somewhat difficult to categorize.[32] Here I shall confine myself to more literary aspects of his Platonic reception, while acknowledging that there are also intriguing issues about his precise philosophic stance.[33]

While Plutarch's Platonically influenced works tend to be about particular topics and controversies in contemporary Platonism, many take their structure or themes from ideas found in the dialogues. According to modern editions of Plutarch, he mentions approximately 28 of the then-standard 36 dialogues of Plato.[34] Throughout his large oeuvre, Plutarch looks primarily to Plato for structural influences, interpretive methods, and ideological perspectives. Literary and rhetorical developments during the Second Sophistic were once considered marginally important for understanding Plutarch's corpus, but more recent studies have argued not only that Plutarch's Greek shows signs of the linguistic features that will mark a text as Atticist in the next century,[35] but also that we can see how Plutarch's uses of Platonic themes and structures anticipate authors such as Apuleius in their ability to move deftly between genres.

Plato was not only Plutarch's guide for a number of philosophical themes and interpretations: Plutarch's view of Platonism allowed him a firm foundation for other topics, such as his various interests in literature and history. He maintains a dialogic structure throughout in his *Moralia*, and utilized various types of dialogues, as Plato did: dramatic, as in *De cohibenda ira;* narrative, as in *De sera numinis vindicta*; or a mix of the two, as in *De genio Socratis*.[36] Plutarch also develops "Platonic" myths: *De sera numinis vindicta* ends in a way that is similar to the *Republic*, and much of *De Facie* is presented like a foreign myth, as we saw with Dio and the myth of the Magi, above (again, Plato's myth regarding the invention of writing in the *Phaedrus* (274c–275c) is considered a prominent model). Indeed, Plutarch combines the use of myth alongside his own allegorical interpretation in *De Iside et Osiride*, in which he illustrates a methodology in line with his ideas on how young men might safely read poetry.[37] Further, the structure of his *Quaestiones Convivales*, as a gathering of

32 Cf. Dillon (1977), 184–230.

33 E.g. his reconciliation of his own and Plato's tentative skepticism with the possibility of maintaining positive philosophical doctrines; note the titles of the lost *On the Unity of the Academy since Plato* and *On the Difference Between Pyrrhoneans and Academics*.

34 Jones (1916).

35 e.g. Schmitz (2014).

36 cf. D.L. 3.50.

37 *De audiendis poetis* 19e–20b; see also *Quaest. conv.* 622c, 673c.

seven philosophers, is modeled on Plato's *Symposium*, especially in its use of indirect speech. There too we find a reference, much like Dio's, of the winged chariot in an allegory of the whole cosmos.[38]

Plutarch's structural and thematic uses of Plato can be complicated. At the start of his *Amatorius*, where there is an immediate request for the recounting of the story about discourses on love (*peri Erōtos logoi*, 748), it becomes evident that the *Symposium* was a structural influence. It too was made up of such discourses on love, and was characterized as such by Aristotle in his *Politicus*.[39] But the *Amatorius* imitates a number of elements from the *Phaedrus* as well, since its central doctrines regarding love derive from it, especially where madness is introduced (758d, cf. *Phaedrus* 244a and 265a). While both Platonic dialogues in this way prefigured Plutarch's discussion of right and wrong love and supply the main threads of Plutarch's work, though, from the very start our attention is drawn primarily to the *Phaedrus.* For example, in the first section of the work, the character Flavianus says:

> Discard for the moment from your recital the meadows and shady nooks of the poets, the gadding growth of ivy and smilax, and all the other commonplaces on which writers seize, as they endeavor with more enthusiasm than success to endorse their work with Plato's Ilissus, his famous *agnus castus* and the gentle grass–grown slope.[40]

Instead of using Plato's full *locus amoenus* from the *Phaedrus*, Plutarch points out how it has already become a favorite, even hackneyed trope of contemporary authors, and one that is less than successfully used in their efforts to enhance their text. Autobulus' recounting, he states, can do without it. Of course, in this *recusatio*, Plutarch has still managed to invoke the entire start and setting of Plato's *Phaedrus*. And his invocation is itself done allusively: the Illisus, the river Socrates and Phaedrus walk along, sets off the premonitory discussion of the methods of interpreting myths (229a, 230b), and here is used metonymically for the whole dialogue. But instead of the famous "very tall plane tree" (*tēn hupēlotatēn platanon*, 229a, 230b), Plutarch mentions "the tall and shady 'chaste-tree' (*agnus castus*)[41] next to it," and "the most delightful thing

38 Trapp (1990), 155

39 2.1262b11; on Plato and the *Amatorius,* cf. Hunter (2012), 185–222.

40 Hembold (trans.) (1961).

41 LSJ s.v. ἄγνος A. = λύγος, "chaste-tree, the branches of which were strewed by matrons on their beds at the Thesmophoria … (Associated with the notion of chastity from the likeness of its name to ἁγνός.)"

of all": the perfectly thick gentle slope of grass (230c). In this way, Plutarch at once is able to provide and at the same time withhold the complete picture of Plato's famous "charming resting place" (230b). The allusion and subtlety of the description is not to be taken as Plutarch's imposing a moratorium on the dialogue's images, but rather as the recognition that that these images should not be used poorly, or in slavish imitation. It is a thoughtful and well performed study on the original.[42]

Hence, irrespective of his philosophic influence, we should also give Plutarch credit for expanding the various ways an author is able to engage Plato's dialogues: as structural models, as sources of allusion, and as examples for allegorical reading and imitation. Plato is central to Plutarch's approach to philosophy and literature, and can be seen to have influenced his large body of work structurally, thematically, stylistically, and ideologically.[43]

III The Greek Orator: Aristides

Publius Aelius Aristides (117–181CE) was a highly successful orator during the Second Sophistic, and perhaps a prime example of the type of celebrated orators of the time. The variety and quality of his work – addresses for public and private occasions, polemical essays, declamations on historical themes, and prose hymns to various gods – made him famous within his own lifetime.[44] For us he is an important figure regarding the transmission of Hellenism during the second century. About him, Philostratus writes that "Aristides was of all the sophists most deeply versed in his art," and his strength lay in the elaborate reflection of a particular theme. This expansiveness is one reason given for his reluctance of extempore speaking (*VS* 585); another is his remarkable accuracy in emulating a purified, Attic prose style (*VS* 581–2).

42 Trapp (1990), 160; on the *Amatorius* and Plato, cf. *ibid.* 157–61.

43 In assessing Plutarch's connection to Second Sophistic literature, it is not insignificant that two of Plutarch's lost works seem to have been addressed to his more rhetorically-inclined contemporary, the Greek philosopher-sophist, Dio. Cf. 204 "Speech (in Reply) to Dio (delivered) at Olympia," and 227 "Discourse (in Reply) to Dio"; cf. Russell (1973), 7.

44 A bronze statue of Aristides was set up in the agora of Smyrna, which was inscribed: "For his goodness and speeches," Behr (1968), 111 n.64.

There are three primary works in which Aristides engages Plato consistently. Plato is most obviously invoked by the title of his longest oration *Pros Platōna peri rhētorikēs* (*Against Plato: In Defense of Rhetoric*).[45] The sheer length of the *Peri rhētorikēs* (277 pages in Behr's Loeb edition) is testament to the attention Aristides brings to this topic.[46] In this discourse, Aristides takes Plato to task for being slanderous to the orators and to oratory. His initial target and springboard is the passage in the *Gorgias* (quoted at length) in which Plato describes oratory as shameful, and not an art (τέχνη) (463a–465c). This is a treatment of rhetoric that a number of Second Sophistic authors and rhetoricians were compelled to confront (or at least redefine).[47]

The second is a short work written soon after *Peri rhētorikēs*, *Pros Kapitōna* (*To Capito*). The *Peri rhētorikēs* was written in Pergamum perhaps between 145 and 147, when Aristides was ill and absorbed in the process of incubation at the local Asclepieion. Pergamum also happened to be the site of a revival of scholastic Platonism; *Pros Kapitōna* is addressed to a Pergamene who may have been writing on behalf of Platonists likely associated with the Platonic school of Gaius in the area. This response might strike modern readers as confusing, because Aristides' target seems to have been identified at the end of *Peri rhētorikēs* to be certain Cynics who had mined the *Gorgias* for anti-rhetorical passages;[48] however, some of the local Platonists seem to have taken his first speech personally.[49] Thus, it seems, members of the Platonist school had in turn made an attack on Aristides' *Peri rhētorikēs*, which had itself been based at least partly on personal criticisms of Plato.[50]

Aristides' third Platonic work is a long speech in defense of oratory and on behalf of orators is *Pros Platōna huper tōn tettarōn* (*Against Plato: On behalf of the Four*). "The Four" are Pericles (c. 495–429 BCE), Cimon (510–450 BCE), Miltiades (c.555–489 BCE), and Themistocles (c. 524–459 BCE). This third is a continuation of an argument started halfway through *Defense* (sections 319–361) and further developed in the shorter *Pros Kapitōna.* In it, Aristides focuses on

45 Translated a little more neutrally by Behr (1986): "To Plato: In Defense of Oratory."

46 Anderson (1993), 140.

47 For Quintilian (*Institutes* 2.15.28–29), it is a misreading of the *Gorgias* to imagine that Plato thought that oratory was not an art. According to him, the *full* discussion in the *Gorgias*, taken with the *Phaedrus*, involved moral arguments that has to do with the improper use of rhetoric during Plato's lifetime.

48 A point perhaps made explicit in the peroration of *Peri rhētorikēs* (462–6).

49 Cf. Behr (1986), 479 n.1.

50 In particular, regarding Plato's three trips to Italy; cf., e.g., *Peri rhētorikēs* 280–298.

defending these four statesmen by showing that they did not flatter the masses and proved their virtue through their respective leadership of the Greeks.

Aristides' method of refutation, of which he seems quite proud throughout these works, is to use Plato's own words against him. He develops his arguments as if in a courtroom, in which he reads the law, deposes witness, and offers counterarguments, among other legal procedures.[51] His defense, then, is often accomplished by quotations taken from other dialogues besides the defamatory *Gorgias*, primarily from the *Phaedrus*, *Laws*, *Menexenus*, *Politicus*, *Apology*, and *Euthydemus*.[52] The charge itself is read "out loud" from the *Gorgias*, starting from the comparison of rhetoric to cookery as types of flattery.[53] He develops a forensic atmosphere from the very start (20): "Just as those who go on to prosecute the charge of an illegal proposal, we shall begin with his own statements."

Aristides' uses of Plato, then, includes this first methodological engagement by directly quoting passages which refute the condemnation of rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, potentially (he thinks) cutting off avenues of criticism from those sympathetic to Plato.[54] (*Pros Kapitōna* suggests that this did not work.) In this way, however, Aristides forces the accuser to incriminate himself, and so engages with Plato as a defendant, a witness for the prosecution, and, by direct engagement, a peer.[55]

Further, throughout these essays Aristides drops innumerable small unlabelled Platonic echoes. For example, just before he quotes at length from the section on mantic inspiration from the *Phaedrus* (244a–245b), Aristides provides the following short exchange (52): "'Where please,' he says, 'is my boy'? Indeed, where please is the speech to the boy? Here it is at hand." Here

51 Cf. 20, below. Aristides often signals his general method: cf., e.g., *Peri rhētorikēs* 50, 137, 203, 277, 310, etc.

52 By rough count, according to Behr's volume on Aristides, he knew of 23 of the dialogues including *Alcibiades 1*, and a number of spurious or doubtful works: e.g., *Amatores*, *Epinomis*, *Eryxias*, and *Theages*.

53 *Grg.* 463a–465c. In this first oration, he refutes the charge made by Plato that oratory is not an art (135–77), and that it flatters the masses (178–203), first, by countering that this relationship is presented by Plato without argument or proof (13–50), and, second, by quoting statements made in other dialogues that specifically contradict this passage (starting at 51).

54 E.g., *Huper tōn tettarōn* 568: "How then could someone have good reason to to feel resentment toward us when Plato himself confirms the truth of what we say?" (trans.) Flinterman (2002).

55 Cf., e.g., 60: "If indeed he is serious, he obviously testifies for us, so that his serious side is in our favor." Behr (trans.) (1997).

Aristides is imitating the exchange between Phaedrus and Socrates just before Socrates launches into his long and important second speech in the *Phaedrus.*[56] This exchange marks the central portion of Plato's dialogue, the moment before Socrates advances the myth in which he moves beyond the topics and limitations of the early speeches and presents his image of the divine train of Zeus (243e–257b). In this moment before he starts his own defense by showing Plato "to be obviously refuted by his own statements," Aristides himself plays both parts of the exchange between Socrates and Phaedrus, just as he controls all the parts of the defense on behalf of rhetoric.

In these speeches, Aristides takes his attack on Plato seriously, defending his critique,[57] while acknowledging the momentousness of the task at hand.[58] At the same time, he is complimentary to Plato throughout, insisting repeatedly in these speeches on his respect for him.[59] And elsewhere, in his *Hieroi Logoi* (*Sacred Tales*), his vision of the newly built "temple to Plato" may be a reference to the recently developing status of the "divine Plato".[60] In turn, Aristides' defense will be taken seriously: the impact of Aristides' three Platonic works on later Neoplatonism is clearly signaled by Porphyry's (234–305CE) seven-book work *Against Aristides*, which survives in fragments.[61]

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56 Cf. *Phdr.* 243e: "Socrates: 'Where is the youth to whom I was speaking? He must hear this also, lest if he does not hear it, he accept a non-lover before we can stop him.' Phaedrus: 'Here he is, always close at hand whenever you want him.'" (trans.) Fowler (1925).

57 Cf. 6–12; e.g., there is no reason to be scared of the ancients, even given their eminence; truth is more important than decorum, even under the circumstances; and Plato felt comfortable censuring Homer, who was far older and not allowed to defend himself in the flesh (just as Plato will not be able to, with Aristides).

58 Cf. 19: "Such then is the magnitude of the present contest." (trans.) Behr (1997).

59 At *Peri rhētorikēs* 428, Plato is ranked among Homer and Sophocles the most distinguished in their category (as having come close to oratory); cf. as well *Pros Kapitōna* 508, where Plato is coupled with Demosthenes as Aristides' personal favorites.

60 5.61–63: "When I was at the entrance, I saw that it was a temple of Plato the philosopher, and that a great and fair image of him was erected there, and a statue of someone was erected on his right. A very beautiful woman sat upon a threshold and discoursed about Plato and the statue. Some others also took part in the discussion, and at the same time discoursed as if it is ancient. And I said 'It is not possible to say that it is ancient. For the form of the workmanship shows that it is rather recent, and there was not much regard of Plato in Plato's own life time, but,' I said, 'his reputation grew later.'" Citation in Jazdzewska (2011), 3.

61 Cf. Jacoby (1923–58) and Behr (1968).

For our purposes, these speeches can be seen to accomplish a number of things. Aristides seems to be counterattacking Plato's rejection of the Greek heritage by being ungracious to the great four statesmen, rather than Plato himself.[62] In addition, Aristides focuses on Plato's inconsistencies in an effort to undermine the primary task of the Platonists: that is, to describe and explain Plato's consistent, unified philosophical doctrine.[63] It may also be the case that, by ending his long work emphasizing that Plato in fact honored rhetoric, used it in the dialogues, and was a great orator, Aristides is using this type of method himself. Despite his (at times, disconcertedly) literal reading of Plato's various statements, Aristides could be seen as working through Plato's ideas regarding rhetoric in the same way Platonists of the time were working on his metaphysics and ethics. That is, after displaying his ability to show Plato's own inconsistencies, he then brings into line various strands of Platonic argumentation from various dialogues in order to demonstrate Plato's true stance on a topic: in this case, his views concerning rhetoric.[64] In this way, then, Plato would justly hold a place among the great *rhetores* for Aristides; in turn, the latter can be seen to have matched wits with one of the major thinkers of the past, in a similar way that, as Aristides himself points out, Plato himself had wrestled with Homer in his Book 10 of the *Republic*.[65]

IV The Satirist: Lucian

The rhetorician and satirist Lucian (c. 125–after 180CE) wrote nearly flawless Attic Greek.[66] If his own texts can be trusted, he was from Samosata (*Quomodo Historia conscibenda sit* 24) and was by birth a Syrian (*Bis accusatus sive Tribunalia* 25). There are more than eighty surviving works attributed to Lucian: declamations, essays both laudatory and sarcastic (sometimes both at the same time), satiric epigrams, and comic dialogues and symposia. According to modern editions of Lucian, he refers to at least 19 out of the then-standard 36 Platonic dialogues.

62 De Lacy (1974), 10.

63 Tarrant (2000), 132–3.

64 Cf., e.g., *Peri rhētorikēs* 455–6: "Indeed, we act now on Plato's behalf. For if this was really his intention, as I do not dispute, and he exempted the pure and real oratory, the masses ought not to be misled and be unaware of this fact, nor satisfied, as it were, with a clear verdict, to deliberate more swiftly than is expedient about such important matters." (trans.) Behr (1986).

65 Cf. *Pros Kapitōna* 38 and 42; and *On Behalf of the Four* 605 and 653.

66 Cf. Dickey (2007), 9. If we believe Lucian himself, the worst style is a mixture of the Asiatic and Attic styles, and the best Attic is "purified" (αποκεκαθαρθαι); cf. *Verae historiae* 21.

Lucian's work has long been thought to include a wide range of Platonic echoes and allusions.[67] Lucian's appropriation of Plato can be noticed on nearly every level: from thematic,[68] structural,[69] linguistic,[70] allusive,[71] down to the smallest quotation.[72] Studies of the relationship between Plato and Lucian are numerous, and continue to increase in number.[73]

Lucian uses the dialogic form often, and, in the *Bis accusatus sive Tribunalia* (33), famously defends this use from the accusations of both of the characters Rhetoric and Dialogue: they claim that he has abused both of them by having merged them, and, as a result, invented a new form by bringing together (Old) Comedy and (Platonic) Dialogue. Lucian makes his defense by means of Aristophanic and Platonic references and quotations. For example, the narrator says that

67 According to Householder (1941), 36, Platonic allusions and reminiscences account for 7% of Lucian's use of authors in prose works, while quotations make up 5%, making Plato third in frequency behind Homer and *Comicus Incertus*. This type of frequency is consistent with the majority of the literature from the Second Sophistic; cf. de Lacy (1974), 4.

68 E.g., the role of Frankness in Lucian's *Piscator* can be read alongside the role of frankness in the *Laches* of Plato; both discuss παρρησία as the harmony between words and deeds (*Piscator* 31; *Laches* 188d). Lucian's second-century philosophers (the representatives of the great classical philosophical schools) seemed to read and study philosophy simply in order to practice the reverse (34). This situation is upsetting, since "these cheats are often more convincing than the genuine philosophers" (42), are all the more influential, and are therefore all the more damaging.

69 Branham (1985), 91 acknowledges the formal similarities between Lucian and Plato, for example, the *Anacharsis* is, generally speaking, modeled on Plato: in that dialogue, Lucian takes advantage of the tripartite division of the *Gorgias*.

70 Cf. the words of "Chryssipus" about Plato in the *Piscator* (22): "Marvelous sublimity, superlatively Attic elegance, charm and persuasiveness, insight, subtlety, opportune seductiveness in demonstration – all this is yours to the full."

71 In Lucian's *Symposium* (1), the late arrival of an important person in the report of the story, Dionicus, is similar to the late arrival of Plato's original narrator of *Symp.*, Aristodemus (174e). Further, the arrival of the uninvited guest in Lucian's text is similar to Alcibiades' sudden appearance (212c). Both of these narrative turns become sympotic devices after Plato; cf. Hug (1932).

72 In the *Rhetorum Praeceptor*, the narrator applies Plato's "famous phrase about driving full-tilt in a winged car" to the student with more grace that Plato applies it to Zeus (22).

73 Tackaberry (1930); Chapman (1931); Householder (1941); Branham (1989); Whitmarsh (2005) compares the *Lexiphanes* with *Symp.*; Anderson (1976) and Nesselrath (1985) discuss a connection between the *De Parasito* and *Grg*. Anderson (1976) connects aspects of *Symp.* and *Nigrinus*, and the *Rhetorum Praeceptor* and *Phdr*. Helm (1906) and Marsh (1998) see portions of the *Revivescentes sive Piscator* modeled on the *Phd*. Marsh (1998), as well, connects *De Parasito* with both *Phdr.* and *Symp*.

before he moved to this method of writing, he was formerly treading the air above the clouds,[74] where "great Zeus is born along, driving his winged chariot,"[75] but was subsequently dragged down as he was flying over the zenith and ascending up over "heaven's back."[76] These references all have strong Platonic associations.

To look at one specific example, both Lucian's *De Parasito* and Plato's *Gorgias* are interested in art, skill (*technē*) and the idea of flattery. The place to begin with Lucian's dialogue is with the Greek title of the work: *Peri parasitou hoti techē hē parasitikē* (*On the Parasite, Parasitic an Art*).[77] The first part of the title is similar to the sort given to Plato's dialogues by Thrasyllus, per the tradition (e.g., Diogenes Laertius 3.59): the subtitle of the *Gorgias* is *peri rhētorikēs* (*On Rhetoric*). The second Lucianic subtitle immediately brings to mind works from the rhetorical handbook tradition, a number of which were titled *he technē rhetorikē*. Further, it is this subject that comprises Socrates' central question in the *Gorgias*: whether rhetoric is an art. Lucian's dialogue is not simply a mere reversal of Plato, however, where the superior rhetoric is pitted against philosophy, and is in turn shown to be the greatest art (as perhaps in Aristides). Instead, Lucian takes Plato's idea of rhetoric as a form of flattery (*kolakeia*), and turns this embarrassment into the highest art form of parasitism, which is itself a *technē* that proves to be superior to both philosophy and, doing Plato one better, rhetoric as well (39). Parasitism is shown to be not merely an art, but the *true* art of flattery. Therefore, in the background of any discussion of Lucian's dialogue is the connection between Plato's idea of rhetoric as flattery as opposed to philosophy, and Lucian's own conception of parasitism as opposed (and superior) to both philosophy and rhetoric.

Further, the entire opening of the *Peri parasitou* is a parody of the start of the *Gorgias*. In Lucian, Simon *finally* concedes his profession as a parasite after a long delay, and then states that he is a "craftsman in it" (*dēmiourgos tautēs*); this terminology (not to mention the long delay) invokes Plato's definition of rhetoric as a "craftsman of persuasion" (*peithous dēmiourgos*), a description found only in Plato's *Gorgias*.[78] And the use of –ικήν by Lucian is a play on the professional terminology

74 As the character of Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (225).

75 Cf. *Phdr.* 246e.

76 Cf. *Phdr.* 247b-e.

77 LSJ s.v. παράσιτος: "A. one who eats at the table of another, and repays him with flattery and buffoonery, parasite."

78 Cf. 452e9, 453e3, 454a1, 454a3, and 454e8. This formula is used during the Second Sophistic when referencing Platonic discussions of rhetoric: cf. Plutarch, *An seni* 792d7; Aristides, *Peri rhētorikēs* 46.30, 47.12, 15, and 16; Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 2.2.1; and Origen, *CC* 6.57.20.

in the *Gorgias:*[79] the parallels for *parasitikē* Tychiades gives are *grammaticē* and *iatrikē* ("grammatical" and "medical" arts, 3), just as Socrates gives *huphantikē* and *mousikē* ("weaving" and "musical" arts, 449d) as parallels for *rhetorikē*.

But Lucian also moves beyond structural and linguistic echoes in this dialogue. We learn in this dialogue that Lucian has a theory about Plato's failed trips to Sicily. We know from Plato's letters that, whether from his own description or reflecting the Platonic epistolary tradition, the trips were not exactly successful (cf. *Epistulae* 3 and 7). Lucian's reason for the excursions failing contains a smart shift of perspective: according to Lucian, Plato went to Sicily to be a parasite. Even worse than that, however, he ended up a *failed* parasite (34).

In his 1931 *Lucian, Plato and Greek Morals*, Chapman wrote that Lucian was the first "modern" reader of Plato.[80] In some ways, Lucian was one of the most interesting Platonic readers in the second century CE. He held some very specific ideas regarding what Plato's works were about, which involved conclusions that could only be drawn by means of careful readings of the dialogues. For one, Lucian was not overtly occupied with smaller details or traditional doctrines or, for that matter, any specific Platonic tradition (except the sort he satirized).[81] As a master at the dialogue form, he seems to have seen clearly the various points being expressed by Plato's works, and was able to turn them inside out in a way that allows for a closer look. As a result, it seems fair to see Lucian's manipulation of the various Platonic themes and arguments in the dialogues as without equal during the Second Sophistic. In the end, Lucian introduces us to a very different Plato from the one we might otherwise know. In the least, many of Lucian's works are testaments to the idea that when reading Lucian, it helps if one's Plato is not very far out of reach.

V The Latin Sophist: Apuleius

The polymath Apuleius (125–c. 180 CE) can be thought to occupy a variety of roles: scholastic Platonist (in the doxological tradition in *de Platone et eius dogmate*), speculative philosopher (*de Deo Socratis*), translator (*de Mundo*, portions of a Latin *Phaedo*), and sophistic performing intellectual and rhetorician (*Apology*, *Florida*), among others. In his own day, he was likely best known as an advocate, rhetor, and *philosophus*. Certainly, any single categorization of

79 Cf., e.g., Nesselrath (1985), 83–84.

80 Chapman (1931), 170–71.

81 Cf. the end of Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet*.

Apuleius would be overly limiting.[82] Most famous for the proto-novel *Metamorphoses* (or *Asinus aureus* (*Golden Ass*), according to Augustine), Apuleius studied poetry, geometry, music, and dialectic at Athens, and likely considered the study of Platonic philosophy to be a necssary part of a general higher curriculum. Of his primarily philosophical works, only *de Deo Socratis* is attributed to him without question; *de Platone* and the translation of the Ps-Aristotelian *de Caelo* have more recently gained support as his.[83]

Apuleius' Platonic interests are elsewhere discussed in this volume. In his work overall, Apuleius references at least 22 out of the then-standard 36 dialogues,[84] and though known as a Platonist (primarily, but not exclusively, by his own admission), he is too much of a chameleon to be labeled only that. Apuleius' self-fashioning, and desire to surpass categorization, is reflected in his *Florida* (20.12):

> For Empedocles composed verses, Plato dialogues, Socrates hymns, Epicharmus music, Xenophon histories, and [Xeno]crates satire. But your very own Apuleius cultivates all these arts together and worships all nine Muses with equal zeal. His enthusiasm is, I admit, greater than his capacity, but that perhaps makes him all the more praiseworthy, inasmuch as in all excellent endeavors it is the effort that merits praise, since success is after all a matter of chance.[85]

Apuleius engaged in uses of Plato that transgress the typical scholastic uses, although his *de Platone* is similar to other examples from more staid doxologists or Platonists (such as Diogenes Laertius, and parts of Alcinous' *Didaskalikos*). For example, Apuleius invokes Plato often in some of his most oratorical or sophistic displays, as in the quotation above.

In his *de Deo Socratis*, presented as an extemporaneous oration that fits the model of sophistic lectures from the time period, Apuleius discusses an elaborate demonology stemming from an explanation of Socrates' divine sign. At once the most complete version of Middle Platonic daemonology we possess, this text is at the same time replete with some of Apuleius' most highly wrought rhetorical style.[86] So it is not merely in Apuleius' obviously philosophical works that Plato's images and ideas are found, and he can be seen to use them often

82 Tarrant (2011), XVIII 72.

83 Cf., e.g., Harrison (2000), 174–180.

84 Cf. Thomas (1908).

85 Text from Helm (1959), my translation.

86 Dillon (1977), 320.

as a thematic and ideological touchstones. For example, there has been quite a bit of recent work to identify the underlying Platonic threads in the *Metamorphoses* (such as connections between the tale of Cupid and Psyche and the myth of Eros in the *Phaedrus*, among others[87]). That said, we should note that the very instance of Plato's name creates immediate significance and authority for Apuleius, especially in his more rhetorical endeavors.

Apuleius' impact on the posthumous reception of Plato continued after his own death, since Augustine (354–430CE), about two hundred years later, wrote a polemic against him in *De Civitate Dei* as the representative of Platonic demonology.[88] This work puts Apuleius in noteworthy company when introducing the most illustrious philosophers who chose to follow Plato and who preferred the name "Platonists": "the best known of them are Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Porphyry, who were Greeks; morevover, writing in both languages, Greek and Latin, the African Apuleius gained fame as a Platonist."[89] Yet even as we take into account the vitriolic arguments Augustine makes, he still can't help but praise Apuleius' *Apology* as "a most copious and eloquent oration of this Platonic philosopher."[90]

VI The Platonic Rhetor: Maximus

Except for three short biographical notes, we know very little about Maximus of Tyre. We learn from a few sources that Maximus became prominent (*agnoscitur*) in Olympiad 232 (149–152CE), "lectured in Rome at the time of Lucius Aurelius Commodus" (sole imperator from 180–192 CE), and also that his *Dialexeis* were given upon his "first visit" to the imperial capital. All other biographical information must come from his *Dialexeis* themselves, a series of 41 shorter speeches addressed to young men in which he tries to merge a generalized Middle Platonic outlook with many of the topics that are ubiquitous in Second Sophistic texts. For example, Maximus writes about such varied themes as Socrates' *daemonion* (8 and 9), friendship and flattery (14), Homer's treatment by Plato in the *Republic* (17), whether virtue or pleasure is the goal of life (29–33), and God and the sources of evil (41).

87 E.g., Plato's *Republic* and Plutarch's *Eroticus*, specifically; cf. Tarrant (2011), XVIII. Cf. also Schlam (1970), O'Brian (2002), Kahane (2007), Kirichen (2008), Fletcher (2014), and Ulrich (2016).

88 Book 8, *passim*.

89 *Ciu. Dei* 8.12 Wiesen (trans.).

90 *Ciu. Dei* 8.19.

Though Maximus quotes and draws from an impressive list of classical authors and philosophers (e.g., Solon, Diogenes, Epimenides, Anacharsis, Thales, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Pythagoras, Leucippus, Anaxagoras, Protagoras, *et al.*), and though he does not seem to adhere to any particular philosophical school, his metaphysical and ethical approaches are determined by his understanding of the popular generalized Platonism as was found in the second century. And even though we can say that he references ideas and images from at least 18 dialogues, Maximus' thought and interests seem to reflect a familiarity with the Plato of the time, not with the dialogues themselves. We can only speculate about his knowledge of the dialogues, first, because there are not any detailed substantial Platonic quotations, and, second, because he seems primarily interested in topics that had taken on lives of their own only after Plato's death: demonology, the theoretical versus the practical life, fate and free-will, and an idiosyncratic formulation of the tripartite and bipartite soul.[91] These are, of course, views that have strong Platonic precedent, but his uses of Platonic themes are painted with very broad strokes while at the same time embellished with an unPlatonic sophistic style. The general Platonism he comes back to – the transcendent, not immanent, God (2.10); the two-world model: the perceptible world of the senses, the intelligible world of the mind (11.7); and the soul's goal to ascend through the heavens (11.10) in order to see God (11.11–12) – would be easily recognized as Platonic by an educated audience member during the Second Sophistic. This is not the subtle allusiveness of a Dio or Lucian.

Even Maximus' methodology is that of a straightforward Middle Platonism. In *Oration* 11, Maximus realizes that the way to answer the question "What is God for Plato?" (the accepted title of that oration) is to mine his dialogues for "philosophical gold", and then find a way to test its authenticity and worth:

> But wait a moment! I am gradually beginning to form an impression of what such an account might in fact involve. The case is like that of miners for precious metals. They, when they cut into the earth and dig out their gold, are unable to distinguish for themselves what really is and is not gold, and need others to assay it for them with fire. In my opinion a first reading of Plato's dialogues is just like mining for gold (*atechnōs*

91 Both, however, have Platonic precedent – bipartite: cf. *Phdr.* 246a–c (but see 253c–d); tripartite: e.g., *Rep.* IV and *Tim.* 69a–70b. Parallel to the process of the creation of the divisions of the soul in *Rep.* from bipartite (436b–439e) to tripartite (starting at 440e–441a), Maximus even allows for a division of the souls that seems initially bipartite and then secondarily tripartite (cf. 27.5).

> *chrusou*): after the first engagement one needs the assistance of some further technique (*heteras…technēs*), which will assay and purify what has been mined, not with fire but with the light of reason (*logōi*); only then can constructive use be made of the gold, once the assaying and purification is done.[92]

First, Maximus here takes on the guise of an extemporaneous display speech, both with his initial exclamation (*Eche atremas* [perhaps: "Keep still!"]) and his narrated process of discovery. Second, we should note that the image of purifying gold applied to philosophical study itself has Platonic precedent.[93] Third, the technique he discovers in this section of text is attributed to Plato (11.6), and is effectively one version of Platonic dialectic, the process of collection and division (cf. *Phdr.* 265d–266b). This method of analysis – alongside some clearly Peripatetic definitions of life and capabilities – will allow him in the process of this speech both to find the location of God, who sits in the noetic realm like a Great King, and, after a number of instances of emphasizing the ineffability of the divine, to describe God's general characteristics, that is, eternally thinking all things at the same time.[94] We see in this passage, then, the fusion of the type of epideictic form and Platonic matter that Maximus works hard to maintain in these speeches.

So while by no stretch a scholastic Platonist, Maximus employed a generalized framework that his second-century audience would recognize as Platonic. With his stylized Attic Greek winding along in long, sloping Hellenistic periods, Maximus is an entertainer and stylist first and foremost (as he insists in what is often given as his first oration). Moreover, like Apuleius and Dio, he can be read as a sophistically inclined orator who is interested in tapping into Plato's authority during the Second Sophistic, not to mention the sturdy philosophical stance and recognizable methodology that a generalized Platonism affords him. In the end, though, when reading his 41 orations, there is a sense that Maximus has identified a divisive plurality in the philosophical landscape of the time. He seems – quite earnestly – to want to bring philosophy back to its roots: that is, to discover the right way to live in order to be truly happy. Based on his work, Maximus' answer seems to depend, at least in part, on some type of Platonism.

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92 *Dissertatio* 11.2 Trapp (trans.) (1990).

93 *Plt.* 303e; cf. Trapp (1990), 97 n.15.

94 Cf. *DA* 3.4–5, 429a10–430a25, *Metaph.* 12.1075a10; in Middle Platonism: Alcinous, *Did.* 10.164.18–20; also cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* V.9.4.2–3 and V.9.5.1–4.

VIII The Doctor: Galen

Galen of Pergamum was an important, successful, and extremely prolific medical writer of this period. It has been shown by Rocca elsewhere in this volume that Galen was deeply interested in philosophical as well as medical questions, and in Plato in particular. At the same time, recent work has shown that he can be seen as grounded in the most important characteristics of the Second Sophistic: he has an interest in giving medical "performances", in creating the illusion of improvisation and spontaneity, and in the display of technical virtuosity under agonistic pressures. In the *de optimo medico cognoscendo*, we read:

> Once I attended a public gathering where men had met to test the knowledge of physicians. I performed many anatomical demonstrations before the spectators; I made an incision in the abdomen of an ape and exposed its intestines: then I called upon the physicians who were present to replace them back [in position] and to make the necessary abdominal sutures – but none of them dared to do this. We ourselves then treated the ape, displaying our skill, manual training, and dexterity. Furthermore, we deliberately severed many large veins, thus allowing the blood to run freely, and called upon the Elders of the physicians to provide treatment, making it clear to the intellectuals who were present that [physicians] who possess skills like mine should be in charge of the wounded.[95]

Galen can be seen here in a performative setting, the kind we hear about regarding sophists on the epideictic stage (for example, the performances of Herodes Atticus)[96]. By challenging his "opponents" in a public gathering and using the language of epideictic oratory, Galen put himself in the realm of self-staging and self-presentation that is common among rhetoricians of the time. In short, Galen boldly established his authority through his superior skill during a staged contest. He has created medical theater.[97]

Galen was no sophist, however. His diatribes against such performers have led scholars to think he was anti-sophistic,[98] and to be sure he had a complicated relationship with them, as did Dio, Maximus, and Aristides (all of whom

95 *De optimo medico cognoscendo* 9.6, translated from the Arabic by Iskandar (1988) (CMG, Supplementum Orientale IV, p. 105). Quoted in Staden (1994), 50.

96 Cf. Anderson (1993), 57–59.

97 Staden (1994), 51.

98 E.g., *de Sophismatis in verbo contingentibus*.

also displayed various sophistic tendencies of their own). In addition, he seems to have pushed against one of the movements of the Second Sophistic: Atticism. Based on some of his literary works, Galen seems to have been interested in "everyday speech" (though always exact and grammatical) while describing complicated medical procedures rather than in stylized, sophistic Attic Greek.[99] But Galen was also a product of his time, and was as much interested in displaying his education and knowledge of the Greek past as any other Second Sophistic author; one of the ways he did this was in his use of Plato.[100] His narrative style and habit of self-fashioning should be read within the context of the Second Sophistic as qualities of an author who knew how to perform within the epideictic, agonistic, and theatrical culture of the time, but, uniquely, in the service of the science of medicine.[101]

IX The Greek Novelist: Longus

Very few genres of literature from the Second Sophistic have garnered as much attention in the last few decades as the Greek novel. We have five surviving Greek novels: Chariton's *Callirrhoe* (mid-1st century), Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe et Clitophon* (early-2nd century), Longus' *Daphnis et Chloe* (2nd century), Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesiaca* (late-2nd century), and Heliodorus of Emesa's *Aethiopica* (3rd century).[102] Given the ubiquity of Plato at this time, and, in particular, the various theories of love found in the *Symposium* and the three versions of eroticism the *Phaedrus*, work on the Greek novel and Plato has focused primarily on these two dialogues. As a result, most of the attention with regard to the influence of Plato have been on Longus' and Tallius' texts.

We might look at the work of Longus as a representative of the genre. Nothing is known of the life of Longus except that he is the traditional author of the ancient Greek or romance *Daphnis et Chloe.* The allusions made in this novel

99 Cf. *de Alimentorum facultatibus* VI 579: "I myself use the names that people use nowadays, since I think that it is better to teach things clearly than to Atticize in the old fashioned way." Powell (trans.) (2003).

100 As well as other types of literature: e.g., Greek poetry; cf. De Lacy (1966) and Rosen (2013).

101 Cf. Staden (1994), especially 53–54.

102 The absence of Plato in Callirrhoe, and its relative earliness, is thought to mark "pre-sophistic" and "sophistic" Greek novels; cf. Hunter (2012), 224 n.4. For Tatius and Plato, cf. Hunter (1983), (1997), and (2012), and Repath (2001). For Longus and Plato, cf. Hunter (2008), 775–89; Repath (2011); and Gillespie (2012). For the Greek novel in general, cf. Repath (2007); Doulamis (2011); and Hunter (2012), 223–7.

are often classical, and are usually considered well incorporated.[103] There are two well-known echoes from the *Phaedrus* in Longus' novel. First, in *Daphnis et Chloe* (1.22.4), we read: "they were happy to see one another and sad to be apart; they wanted something but did not know what they wanted." This passage is thought to be an echo of the *Phaedrus* (255d) at the very point in which Socrates is describing idealized love, the pure realization of self-control and erotic madness:

> So he is in love, but he knows not with whom; he does not understand his own condition and cannot explain it; like one who has caught a disease of the eyes from another, he can give no reason for it; he sees himself in his lover as in a mirror, but is not conscious of the fact.[104]

Given the highly eroticized language of Plato that surrounds this early, romantic echo in Longus, the implication of this passage of the *Phaedrus* for the novel is perhaps clear: we are allowed a glimpse of the sort of love that will only come to pass after a number of events in the novel have run their course.

As a second illustration, later in the novel we find (*Daphnis et Chloe* 2.7.1): "Love is a god, my children, young, beautiful, and winged. That is why he enjoys youth, pursues beauty, and makes souls take wing." And in the *Phaedrus* (249d6):

> All my discourse so far has been about the fourth kind of madness, which causes him to be regarded as mad, who, when he sees the beauty on earth, remembering the true beauty, feels his wings growing and longs to stretch them for an upward flight, but cannot do so, and, like a bird, gazes upward and neglects the things below. My discourse has shown that this is, of all inspirations, the best and of the highest origin to him who has it or who shares in it, and that he who loves the beautiful, partaking in this madness, is called a lover.[105]

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103 Henderson (2009), 8. Henderson writes that Longus incorporates a wider range of literary texts than the other novelists: besides pastoral and romance, we find Homer, especially the *Odyssey*; Sappho; Euripides; Plato, especially *Phdr.*; and, in Book 4, New Comedy. As he writes, "His literary reminiscences are not merely quotation or allusion but always creatively appropriated, so that they become part of the fabric of his own artistic sensibility and the meaning that his narrator attaches to the story." ibid.

104 Henderson (trans.) (2009).

105 Fowler (trans.) (1925).

In the novel, Philetas, the old rustic who advises our young heroes about love, is touching upon the third great speech of the *Phaedrus* and its description of true love, perhaps as a premonition of the couple's future together. The type of love being invoked is one that ignores the material world – only a higher noetic love is the true type of love for Socrates.[106] In addition, this better-known echo seems to be introduced by another, smaller echo from the *Phaedo.* Longus begins this speech about Eros being a god with the words: "The enjoyed this very much, as if they were listening to a story and not a fact (*hōsper muthon ou logon*)" (7.1). In the *Phaedo*, when Socrates is discussing his time in his cell, Plato writes: "So first I composed a hymn to the god whose festival it was; and after the god, considering that a poet, if he is really to be a poet, must compose myths and not speeches (*poiein muthous all' ou logous*)." Given its placement, the echo, reflecting the tension between true and false tales, seems too similar to be a coincidence.

As a last, perhaps fainter allusion to Plato's *Symposium*, just after this previous example in *Daphnis et Chloe*, we read at 2.8.3:

> This must be love and we must be in love with each other without realizing it. Or maybe this is love and I am the only one in love? Then why do we feel the same pain? Why do we seek after each other? (*ti de allēlous zētoumen*;) Everything that Philetas said is true.[107]

This passage looks like an allusion of Arisophanes' speech in the *Symposium*. In particular, the reference to seeking one another (and also of having the same pain) might be a reference to his speech (at 191a–d): "Each of us, then, is but a tally of a man, since every one shows like a flat-fish the traces of having been sliced in two; and each is ever searching for the tally that will fit him (*zētei dē aei to hautou hekastos sunbolon*)."[108] Such echoes are subtle, but, as we have seen, such a faint allusion can be a common method for Second Sophistic authors to invoke Plato for their audience.

Recent work on the ancient novel has uncovered a number of interesting connections with the classical Greek literary past, including Plato's dialogues. Such observations confirm many of the influences that have been seen within

106 The first description of Eros may also refer to *Symp.* (201e), and the start of the speech of Diotima: "For I spoke to her in much the same terms as Agathon addressed just now to me, saying Love was a great god, and was of beautiful things; and she refuted me with the very arguments I have brought against our young friend, showing that by my account that god was neither beautiful nor good." Fowler (trans.) (1925).

107 Henderson (trans.) (2009).

108 Fowler (trans.) (1925).

other genres written during the Second Sophistic, and, given the continued interest in the ancient novel, there will surely be more studies to come.

X The New Rite: Justin Martyr and Clement[109]

As early as the end of the first and start of the second centuries, early Christian apologists began to engage with Plato's ideas and his philosophical and theological reputation. For example, Justin Martyr (100–160CE) tells us (in his second *Apology* and the *Dialogue with Trypho*) that he studied Platonism before becoming a Christian. After becoming acquainted with the Christian doctrine, he realized that Platonic studies had given him the illusion of wisdom (*Trypho* 2): "and such was my stupidity, I expected presently to look upon God (*katopsestai ton theon*), for this is the end of Plato's philosophy." Be that as it may, Justin quotes from eight Platonic dialogues in his work. In fact, it can be said that Justin's two primary sources are Plato and Scripture, because he found important similarities between both teachings (2.13).[110] Because Plato learned his doctrines from Moses and the prophets (1.59–60), however, Justin effectively has only a single source. Though not divinely inspired directly as the prophets were, Plato was nevertheless able to recognize the truth because of the "inborn seed of reason (*logos*)" found in every person. As a result, Justin can say that whatever is right in Plato is due to Moses, just as whatever things are rightly said among all men are the property of Christians (2.13). This conclusion supports his idea that Christian doctrine is the standard against which truth can be measured, since it is the truth beyond all demonstration (7). As a result of this argument, we can attribute Justin's ambiguity toward philosophy, and toward Plato in particular, to the notion that – though in agreement with scripture – Plato's thought is derivative, and a corruption of the *true* word.

Nearly a generation later, Titus Flavius Clemens (Clement, c.150 – c.215CE) tried to combine Greek philosophy systematically – in particular Plato's

109 Lucian *Peregrinus* 11: "He interpreted and explained some of their books and even composed many, and they revered him as a god, made use of him as a lawgiver, and set him down as a protector, next after that other, to be sure, whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult (καινὴν ταύτην τελετὴν) into the world." Harmon (trans.) (1925).

110 Justin sees (at 1.60) a reference in *Tim.* to God's son (cf. 36b). The creation of the world at 1.10 ("God in his goodness created all things at the beginning from shapeless matter for men's sake") is a mixture of Genesis, *Tim.*, and Christianity, and is representative of Justin's fusing of these three sources.

philosophy – and Christianity into a single philosophical system. His use of Plato is discussed in this volume by Ramelli. As his three major works[111] demonstrate, Clement discussed Greek philosophy to a greater extent than any other Christian thinker of his time, and his approach was one way to connect the new religion with ancient Greek culture,[112] and to take advantage of the fact that Plato's metaphysics looks in many ways like early Christian theology.

The second-century Christian engagement with Plato can be seen to be reflected in the tension between, on the one hand, the idea that philosophy is the handmaid of theology (per Clement), and, on the other, that heresies themselves are parented by philosophy (per Tertullian, his contemporary).[113] While Christian apologies written during the Second Sophistic were fundamental to the development of later Christian doctrine, the lasting impact of Platonism on Christianity would only be seen in subsequent generations.

XI Conclusion

Instances of Plato's name, reference to his ideas, and quotations from his dialogues can be found throughout the texts written during the first few centuries of the Common Era. This is of course especially clear among the so-called Middle Platonists of the time (a number of whom are discussed in this volume). But what is indicative of and especially noteworthy about the works written during the Second Sophistic is not merely the ubiquity of allusions to the Platonic dialogues, but the *variety* of ways authors working around the Second Sophistic allude to, engage with, and appropriate Plato as a literary and philosophical authority.

The interests and themes of these various authors, especially those rhetors and sophists who looked to Plato for inspiration regarding structure, form, and especially philosophical weight, are impressively diverse. That said, credit for the ubiquity of Plato's name and doctrines, as well as the sheer variety of contexts in which we find them in the Second Sophistic, is surely due in large part to the wide scope and literary wealth of the dialogues themselves. For the authors of the Second Sophistic, it seems, there is hardly any aspect of life that cannot be traced back to Plato.

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111 *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus*, and *Stromata*.

112 Cf. Boys-Stones (2001), 179–181.

113 *De praescriptione haereticorum* 7; this is in the same chapter in which Tertullian famously writes: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between [Plato's] Academy and the Church?"

PART III

Early Christianity and Late Antique Platonism

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Introduction: Early Christianity and Late Antique Platonism

We now come to a period when Platonism reaches a crossroads, with Christian and non-Christian reception, which initially found much to agree on, becoming increasingly divergent, particularly where the latter went hand-in-hand with the overt expression of polytheistic beliefs. Their initial agreement is emphasized in Ramelli's chapter dealing fleetingly with Clement of Alexandria, and much more fully with Origen in whom scripture may take preference over Plato, but rarely conflicts with him because he was held to be following the same *Logos*. Underlying Ramelli's treatment is the belief that the Christian Origen was so devoted to Plato that there is no bar to assuming that he and the so-called Platonist Origenes known to Longinus, Plotinus and Porphyry were the same man. Sharing the same teacher, Ammonius, and the same admiration for Numenius, particularly as regards his allegorical treatment of myth was concerned, they had similar interests in Plato, similar hermeneutic assumptions, and probably a similar selection of key passages in mind. The influence of Origen on Christian writings endured for some time, involving such well known figures as Eusebius, Gregory Nyssen and Evagrius, and arguably even the Athenian Neoplatonists.

Both Ammonius, as primary oral influence, and Numenius whose writings were widely influential, are also key elements of Plotinus' background, and hence in the background of "Neoplatonism" more widely. Hence we now consider some typical features attributed to Neoplatonic reception of Plato, asking what kinds of generality scholars typically offer about Neoplatonist reception of Plato? We put the matter thus, not because these generalities are flatly false, but rather because the study of individual philosophers within the Neoplatonic tradition shows that such assumptions are often only partially true, or true in unexpected ways, or truer of some Neoplatonists than of others. The mistake lies not in speaking at a fairly high level of generality about *a* Neoplatonic reception of Plato, but in supposing that this reception is utterly monolithic and uniform.

If we think about the *form* of philosophical writing prompted by reflecting on the meaning of Platonism in the 2nd to 6th centuries CE, the detailed commentaries on individual Platonic dialogues stand out. Though many of these are now lost, references to these works would show us that *Alcibiades I*, *Gorgias*, *Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Timaeus* and *Parmenides* were all deemed important enough to prompt commentaries. Other forms of writing characteristic of the Neoplatonic reception of Plato were systematic works relating the teachings of a range of a Platonic

dialogues to a single topic (e.g. Proclus' *Platonic Theology*) or books dedicated to the solution of specific problems, typically with reference to a range of passages from Plato's dialogues (e.g. Proclus' essay *Ten Problems on Providence*).

These forms of writing presuppose that Plato is a systematic and dogmatic philosopher: his dialogues communicate doctrines and the doctrines of different dialogues are consistent and complementary. While in this regard Neoplatonic reception of Plato is not different from Middle Platonic reception, it presupposes that *every word* of the text is suffused with meaning. Admittedly, Alcinous' *Handbook* or Apuleius' *On the Doctrines of Plato* have a less advanced audience in mind, yet even with this consideration the outlines of Plato's doctrines are not tied very tightly to Plato's text. Moreover, even if we consider a Middle Platonic work in commentary form, such as the *Anonymous Commentary on Plato's Theaetetus*, the level of detail in the exegesis of Plato's text is markedly different. The anonymous *Theaetetus* commentator attempts to resolve problems raised by Plato's text. But what he does not deem puzzling, he passes over in silence. By contrast, no detail is too minor for consideration by Neoplatonic commentators.

The Neoplatonic commentaries also place far greater emphasis on the central theme or *skopos* of each dialogue than does the *Anonymous Commentary on Plato's Theaetetus*.[1] The latter identifies a *prothesis* for the *Theaetetus* and in this respect it follows schemes for the organization of Plato's dialogues that give some quite general characterization to each one's subject or mode of teaching. But such a *prothesis* falls short of a Neoplatonic specification of a *skopos*. Each dialogue has a single unifying theme in relation to which every aspect of the dialogue can be explained. The central themes of the important dialogues are distinct and complementary. Collectively a crucial twelve dialogues constitute a course of education capable of transforming a person's life and assimilating him or her to the divine – a notion that we return to regarding the mystagogic character of Plato's works below. These strong assumptions about the unity of each Platonic dialogue do not preclude a strong commitment to intertextuality, both within the Platonic corpus and in relation to other works that are assumed to partake of the same wisdom as Plato. Proclus' methodology in the Fifth Essay of his *Republic Commentary* is not atypical of the Neoplatonic reception of Plato's works. Proclus takes up ten problems or questions one might have about Socrates' treatment of poetry in the *Republic*. Some of these involve puzzles about what is said (or not said) in *Republic* II in relation to other parts of the *Republic*. Other questions address the consistency of what is said in the

1 Cf. Praechter (1910), 128–44

Republic with other passages in the Platonic corpus. Each work is a unified by its *skopos*, but nonetheless what is said in the *Republic* is inevitably consistent with remarks in the *Laws* or the *Phaedrus* and intertextual comparisons may shed additional light on Plato's doctrines.

Another regular feature of the Neoplatonic reception of Plato's dialogues is the correlation between Plato's teachings as revealed in the dialogue under examination and the wisdom of other sacred traditions. So, interpreting Plato from Plato, Amelius argued that *Timaeus* 39e7–9 shows that there are three Demiurges in Plato's cosmology: one that *is* the Forms, one that *has* the Forms present to him, and another that *sees* the Forms in something distinct from himself (Proclus, *in Tim.* III 103.18–24).[2] Within the Platonic corpus, he found further confirmation of this in *Epistle* II 312e's reference to the "three kings". But beyond the Platonic corpus, he saw the same teaching reflected in the Orphic distinction between Phanes, Ouranos and Kronos (Proclus, *in Tim.* I 306.10–14). In addition to Orphic theology, the Neoplatonic commentary tradition is filled with correlations between the theology of Plato and that of the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Some Neoplatonists were also at pains to show that Plato's theology and cosmology was one and the same with that concealed behind the allegorical "screens" used by Homer and Hesiod. The status of Aristotle is more ambiguous. The Neoplatonists recognize that sometimes Aristotle disagrees with the views of Plato and these critical remarks are often the basis for an essay vindicating Plato. (Proclus' final essay in the *Republic Commentary*, defending Plato's ideal of civic unity from Aristotle's criticisms in the *Politics*, is an example.) However, most Neoplatonists have no compunctions about elucidating Plato's teachings by means of Aristotelian distinctions such as that between *dynamis* and *energeia*.[3] In addition, their commentaries on Aristotle frequently seek to show how the two philosophers are consistent and complementary.

The Platonisms constructed by Neoplatonic authors on the basis of their reception of the dialogues were thus capacious – finding room for much of Aristotle, as well as Orphic, Homeric and Chaldaean theology. Were the Platonic building materials for these Platonisms merely the dialogues we now possess, whether genuine (like the *Timaeus*), dubious (like *Alcibiades* I), or spurious

2 Amelius thought that this division of labor was evident from the text itself. Proclus explains that each of the three Demiurges is supposed to be indicated by a verb in *Tim.* 39e7–9 ᾗπερ οὖν νοῦς ἐνούσας ἰδέας τῷ ὃ ἔστιν ζῷον, οἷαί τε ἔνεισι καὶ ὅσαι, καθορᾷ, τοιαύτας καὶ τοσαύτας διενοήθη δεῖν καὶ τόδε σχεῖν.

3 For the manner in which these Aristotelian notions were taken on by Neoplatonists, see Gersh (1986).

(like *Epistle* II)? What of the "unwritten doctrines" or oral traditions of Plato's teaching?[4] At least the following can be said: from the time of Numenius it was widely accepted that Plato was a Pythagorean. Even though Numenius' views on many matters were deliberately rejected by many Neoplatonists, Iamblichus also sought to establish Plato's Pythagoreanism. Many of the concepts that figure in Aristotle's mysterious characterization of Plato's first principles, such as the One and the Indefinite Dyad, form the locus of Neopythagorean speculations in writers such as Eudorus or Moderatus. It is, of course, possible that there was a continuous history of oral teaching from the Old Academy to the second century CE that explains this overlap. Or it may be that Neopythagoreanism adumbrated various accounts of similar sounding first principles on its own or because Neopythagoreans took inspiration from Aristotle's characterization of the first principles of Plato's philosophy. Whatever the cause, it is *as if* the reception of Plato by Neoplatonic philosophers is conditioned by the central concepts of what esotericists now call Plato's unwritten doctrines.

As stated, the Neoplatonists treat Plato's dialogues as semantically dense. Nothing is insignificant – not even the number of persons depicted as present for the conversation[5] or the landmarks noted in the dialogue.[6] Moreover, a feature in one of Plato's dialogues can sustain a number of different readings, depending on the *level* at which we read it. Corresponding to the ontological levels of the cosmos – the physical, the psychic, the noetic – there are physiological, ethical or theological readings of aspects of Plato's texts.[7] This sort of semantic density is alien enough to many modern readers of Plato. But it does not yet capture the sense in which the Neoplatonists suppose that Plato's philosophy is *mystagogic*. This feature of their reception of Plato requires explanation.

A standard feature of Hellenistic moral theorizing is the specification of a school's *telos* or goal of living. For the Epicureans it was the pleasant life; for the Stoics, the life in agreement with nature. Middle Platonic philosophers

4 The *fons et origo* for the endeavor to reconstruct an unwritten Platonic teaching is Krämer (1959).

5 Cf. Proclus, *in Tim.* I 15.25–18.30 where Proclus provides ethical, natural and theological readings of the opening line in which Socrates counts the three participants and notes the missing guest from yesterday's conversation.

6 Phaedrus tells Socrates that he has been with Lysias at the house of Epicrates "near the house of Olympian Zeus" (227b5). Since Hermias regards Lysias as someone whose corrupt eros is focused on visible beauty, Hermias reads this detail of Plato's dialogue as a reminder that "even visible beauty is bestowed on generation by Zeus and the Olympian gods" (20.4–5 in the pagination of Lucarini and Moreschini's Teubner edition).

7 Tarrant (2007b), 56–57.

nominate the Platonic *telos* as "assimilation to god" (*Tht.* 176b1–2).[8] It is one thing, however, to say that the goal we ought to aim at is becoming like god and that it is Plato who informs of this truth about the objective of the happy life. This would doubtless be important information for anyone seeking happiness. It would be doubly important if the works of Plato conveyed valuable advice on how one might become like god. It is quite another to say that *through* the activity of reading and understanding Plato one becomes like god. Plato's philosophy is mystagogic in the sense that, say, the rituals associated with the Eleusinian mysteries or the rites of Mithras are. They do not merely convey doctrines. Rather, the correct understanding of Plato's works purifies those who seek the divine and initiates them into communion with the gods.[9] But just as it requires someone who is a priest of Mithras to correctly initiate you, so too for Plato's works to have their mystagogic effect, you must read them with an appropriate master. Establishing a philosophical lineage is important for ancient philosophy generally, but this conception of Plato's philosophy as mystagogic explains the particular concern of the Neoplatonists in this regard.

The mystagogic character of Platonic philosophy fits naturally with the Neoplatonic conception of the first principles of the universe. The super-essential One is, of course, strictly beyond the reach of both reason and language.[10] If a philosopher is to be assimilated to it, this cannot be accomplished through the grasp of some body of information about it. There is no positive information about it and thus no positive characterization that could be communicated through any work of philosophy. The second hypostasis, Intellect, involves a union between thought and its object that transcends discursive thinking. Thus if Plato's philosophy is to help us to achieve the goal of living it must not only *tell us* things, it must *do* things to us, for what we seek to achieve through the understanding of Plato's works is inexpressible.

It is a familiar observation that the Neoplatonic reading of the first principle of Plato's philosophy coincides with the increased importance of the *Parmenides* and its elevation from a merely logical exercise to a work of theology.[11] The "neither … nor …" consequences adduced for the One of the first hypothesis fit well with the purely negative characterization of the One beyond Being. In addition, the metaphysics of emanation and the levels of reality characteristic of Neoplatonism encourage the effort to correlate different hypotheses with different layers of being. But the highly structured repetition with variation

8 For the origins of this formulation of the *telos*, Tarrant (2007a).

9 Cf. Proclus, *PT* I 5.16–6.7.

10 Rappe (2000) provides one way to try to grapple with this conundrum.

11 Cf. Saffrey (1984b) and Steel (1997a) for example.

that characterizes the treatments of the various hypotheses in the latter half of the dialogue is also reminiscent of the structure of ritual.[12]

Summing up, the Neoplatonic reception of Plato prompts philosophical responses taking the form of commentaries on his works that treat him as a dogmatic and systematic philosopher. Focusing on a limited number of dialogues, it treats each one as strongly unified and semantically dense with layers of meaning corresponding to the multiple levels of reality within the Neoplatonists' metaphysics. While each Platonic dialogue has a single theme, dialogues can be interpreted in relation to one another and in relation to other texts that are assumed to partake in the same ancient wisdom as Plato and Pythagoras. Moreover, every word communicates something and often more than one thing, since Plato's dialogues have distinct layers of meaning. Finally, it is characteristic of the Neoplatonic reception to treat Plato's works as mystagogic. Ideally, one does not merely read him. Rather, one is initiated and brought into communion with the divine through him.

Individual Neoplatonists examined in subsequent chapters conform to these generalizations to different degrees and in different ways. Some conform to a greater number than others. But while many philosophers treated in this section form part of the authorized "golden chain" running from Plotinus to Damascius, some differed in being committed to Christianity, with inevitable consequences for the status of Plato. Others, like Julian, while fiercely "pagan", remained outsiders and are simply not mentioned by philosophers like Proclus or Damascius.

While Numenius and Plotinus can be seen as twin fonts of the Neoplatonic reception of Plato, it is only the latter who became the *authorised* font in the eyes of the subsequent tradition. Yet he too was an outlier within that tradition in many ways. Gerson argues that Plotinus received *Platonism* and articulates that philosophy in ways that Plotinus supposed make the best sense of that inheritance. Importantly, Platonism was not exhausted by Plato's dialogues. Moreover, while Plato was – in Plotinus' estimation – one of the great Platonists, he was by no means the only Platonist. This is why Plotinus was quite willing to adopt Aristotle's notion of the activity of thought thinking itself into his solution to the problem of how all things arise from the One. This resort to a sometimes unorthodox Platonist (i.e. Aristotle) is not a betrayal of Platonism in this broader sense. Plotinus also does not find the expression of Platonism in Plato's dialogues to be as authoritative for him as the underlying principles of this broader Platonism. So Plotinus' *Enneads* show far less systematic and sustained engagement with individual dialogues than do the

12 For instance, see the "frequent repetition" of an invocation in fr. 147 of *CO*.

works of subsequent Neoplatonists. What was more authoritative for him was the tradition of oral teaching passed down through Ammonius Saccas. Thus on Gerson's reading Plotinus did not suppose that Platonism was transmitted exclusively, or perhaps even principally, through the dialogues of Plato. To extract Platonism from Plato takes philosophical work.

When we see Plotinus at work on this task, Gerson admits that the *Parmenides* is an important piece of the puzzle. While the "three natures" corresponding to the One, Intellect and Soul are things that Plotinus took to be indicated by Plato's dialogue (V 1 [10], 8.23–7), Plotinus also finds these principles in *Epistle II* as well as *Republic* and *Philebus*. Equally crucial to Plotinus' notion of the life of intellect are *Sophist* 248e and the intelligible living being of *Timaeus* 30c. So while the *Parmenides* is an important dialogue for Plotinus, it is not yet quite the "keystone" dialogue that it is for Iamblichus and some who come after him.

Gerson also discusses two aspects of Plotinus' philosophy rejected by most subsequent Neoplatonists: matter as a first principle or *archê* of evil and the undescended soul. Later writers such as Proclus took Plotinus' position to be that matter provides a causal explanation for the existence of evil in the sensible cosmos.[13] Such a view would be an unacceptable deviation from the metaphysical monism of what Proclus and others assumed to be the true Platonism. It would place Plotinus in the same camp as Numenius and the Gnostics – philosophers who posited an origin of evil distinct from, and in conflict with, the unitary Good that is the source of all things. Gerson's explanation of Plotinus' view makes Proclus' interpretation of him a mis-reading. When Plotinus says that matter is an *archê* of evil, Gerson claims that he does not mean that it a *causal* principle, though Proclus took it this way.

Platonists such as Numenius or Plutarch who embrace a version of metaphysical dualism in which there are forces opposing the orderly, good, and intelligible arrangement of things can find plenty of passages in Plato's dialogues to authorize their view. So too can those, like Proclus, who suppose that evil is an accidental or epiphenomenal thing, lacking an existence at the level of the totality. It is not obvious which camp has the better claim to fidelity to Plato. However, as Gerson notes, Plotinus' idea that there is an aspect of human souls that has never departed from the intelligible realm is one that is pretty far from any explicit words of Plato. Indeed, the most vivid depiction of the "fall" of human souls into the realm of Becoming – *Phaedrus* 248c, ff – strongly recommends the view that the soul in its entirety descends into incarnation.

13 Opsomer (2001).

Gerson argues that Plotinus regarded the undescended soul as a necessary consequence of the possibility of knowledge. If knowledge is incompatible with grasping mere *representations* of the intelligible objects of that knowledge, then the soul must be identical with those intelligibles within the life of Intellect. Hence there must be an aspect of the self that does not descend from the intelligible realm and remains unified with the Forms, though normally we do not attend to this aspect of ourselves (*Enn.* IV 8.6). This illustrates nicely Gerson's point about Plotinus as a philosopher who seeks to work through the problems that arise from Platonism (broadly construed) even at the expense of fidelity to much that is contained within the dialogues.

This epistemological optimism on Plotinus' part explains why he does *not* celebrate Plato as a mystagogic philosopher. Iamblichus, Proclus and other Neoplatonists who suppose that the soul descends entirely into the body need the reading of Plato to *do* something to them – to initiate them into an understanding whose possession passes discursive limitations and to unite them with intelligible objects that they are psychically separated from. So while Plotinus' reception of Platonism yields a metaphysics that is very similar to that of later Neoplatonists, his relation to the works of Plato is palpably different.

Porphyry's reception of the Platonic legacy is surely colored by his devotion to Plotinus, but in his methods and in the form of his writings he also more closely resembles the Neoplatonists who come after him. Though we have lost the majority of Porphyry's vast body of writing, it is clear from what we still possess that he was far more systematic in his endeavor to reconcile Aristotle's works, and particularly his *Categories*, with what he took to be Platonism. Moreover, we know that Porphyry wrote detailed commentaries on individual Platonic dialogues – a form of writing that Plotinus seems not to have engaged in. Michael Chase's entry on Porphyry also nicely illustrates his adoption of philosophic methods that are characteristic of Aristotle, but not so commonly practiced in Plato's works or in Plotinus' *Enneads*. Thus the fragments of Porphyry's *Timaeus Commentary* show him distinguishing among the various senses of the word "generated" in order to elucidate how a correct understanding of the cosmos' status as generated is consistent with the Aristotelian view that there was never a time at which the cosmos did not exist (fr. 36 and 37, Sodano). On the other hand, the fragments of his commentary also evince the stance toward Plato's dialogues that I above termed "semantic density". Thus, Porphyry utilizes Plato's casual mention of the Demiurge as both "maker *and* father" (*Tim.* 28c3) in his extended campaign against pre-Plotinian views that suppose the *Timaeus'* Demiurge works with a pre-existent matter. A *maker*, such as a carpenter, does indeed work with pre-existent materials. But a *father* generates the whole from himself, as the child results from the parent. Had

Plato merely called the Demiurge a "maker" then there might be room for the confusion of those like Plutarch, Numenius and Atticus who posit matter as unengendered.[14] But Plato's word choice precludes this according to Porphyry.

Porphyry also resembles the subsequent tradition of Neoplatonism in other ways that Plotinus does not. Porphyry was concerned to provide allegorical interpretations of Homer in a Neoplatonic vein, as evidenced by the essay *On the Cave of the Nymphs* (*Od* 13.102–12).[15] In addition, it is evident from Proclus' commentaries on both the *Timaeus* and the *Republic* that Porphyry provided detailed exegesis of Plato's myths. While Plotinus takes up issues arising from mythic passages in Plato, such as the myth of Er (cf. *Enn.* III 4 [15]), his engagement with the myth is problem-based and does not involve any extended exegesis of the meaning of Plato's text.[16]

We noted above the view that the rise of Neoplatonism is linked to the greater centrality of the *Parmenides* for inheritors of Plato's philosophy – though Gerson also noted the multiple sources in which Plotinus himself found the teaching on the three hypostases. The fragmentary *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* has sometimes been attributed to Porphyry. In his entry, Clark remains agnostic about the question of authorship but usefully contrasts the nature of this anonymous commentary with the *Anonymous Commentary on the Theaetetus*. The former, unlike the latter, does not offer philological observations on Plato's text but instead draws from the lemmata under consideration philosophical theses about the single and simple first principle of all things, as well as human knowledge of it. As Clark notes, these concepts are hardly explicit in Plato's text. Thus, while the work seems to take the form of a running commentary, it also functions as an occasion for the elaboration of the author's original philosophy. The author of the commentary refers to Plato's other works for confirmation of his views – in particular *Epistle* VII. Moreover, there is wide agreement that the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* contrasts the form of Platonism that the writer discovers in the dialogue with an alternative found in the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Each of these features illustrates the closer resemblance of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* with the trends identified above as characteristic of the Neoplatonic reception of Plato.

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14 Cf. Hadot (2004), 20 for Plutarch, Numenius and Atticus.

15 By contrast: "Plotinus cannot be said to have made a substantial contribution to the history of the interpretation of Homer." Lamberton (1986), 20.

16 Cf. Brisson (2004), 74–81 for Plotinus' scattered uses of myth in the articulation of his philosophy. He credits Porphyry with providing a synthesis of the various mystical interpretation of the *Odyssey*.

There is widespread agreement that Porphyry was a crucial figure in the Neoplatonic reception of Plato. The sad state of his surviving works means that the study of this influence is problematic, but scholarship dedicated to understanding him has advanced in recent years.[17] Iamblichus is similarly crucial, but here we are somewhat better served by his surviving works.[18] Finamore's entry takes up the psychological and epistemological background to the dispute between Iamblichus and Porphyry about theurgy. At issue is the question of how we are to achieve the goal of living: likeness to the divine. Theurgy was – or perhaps more accurately *became* through time – a form of ritual that sought to unite the soul of the practitioner with the gods.[19] The respective contribution of philosophy and theurgy toward the goal of union with the divine formed the basis for the debate between Iamblichus and Porphyry in the latter's *Letter to Anebo* and the former's response, *On the Mysteries*. Given the identification of the intelligibles in Neoplatonic philosophy with gods, the issue is both soteriological and epistemological.

We noted above Plotinus' epistemological optimism and his corresponding belief that a part of the soul does not descend into the body. As we observed, this seems to go against the grain of Plato's mythic depiction of the soul's descent in the *Phaedrus*. Iamblichus brings the discussion of the human soul's relation to the Forms into closer contact with Plato's dialogues. Finamore's discussion of the fragments of Iamblichus' *Timaeus Commentary* shows how Iamblichus attempted to locate his complex anthropology and epistemology within Plato's account of the generation of the cosmic soul and human souls. Finamore notes that Iamblichus' complex account of the human soul, and its relation to the superior souls of angels, heroes and daimones was not accepted in full by Proclus and the Athenian Platonists.[20] While it is true that Proclus sometimes regards specific readings of Plato's texts by "the divine Iamblichus' as just a bit too wild and high-flown, there is also no question that he sought to devise his account of the human soul with much closer and more specific reference to Plato's dialogues than did Plotinus.

The *relatively* sober and textually grounded character of Iamblichus' reception of Plato is clear from Baltzly's essay on Amelius and Theodore of Asine. Amelius was, of course, the close companion of Plotinus and Porphyry's

17 Cf. Karamanolis and Sheppard (2007) and Smith (1974).

18 In addition to recent translations of Iamblichus' works, see Afonsin, Dillon, and Finamore (2012), Bechtle (2006), Blumenthal and Clark (1993), Shaw (1995) and O'Meara (1989).

19 Cf. Tanaseanu-Döbler (2013).

20 The subsequent controversy about the nature of the soul's descent into Becoming is explored in Steel (1978).

literary rival. The very scant biographical evidence on Theodore associates him with both Porphyry and Iamblichus. Both Amelius and Theodore were the subject of critical work by Iamblichus – now lost, but known to Proclus – directed against "Amelius and his school and Numenius". Iamblichus seems to have been particularly exercised by what he saw as the methodological problems underlying Theodore's engagement with the texts of Plato. Most of the Neoplatonists applied *some* kinds of number symbolism to the interpretation of Plato and the elaboration of their Platonic philosophy. Theodore seems to have been unique in exploiting the fact that Greek utilizes letters to play the role of numerals in order to draw philosophical lessons from Plato's dialogues. That is to say, he used the techniques of what is sometimes called "isopsephy" or "gematria". He also drew inferences about key concepts, such as life or soul, on the basis of the shapes of letters making up the words. The semantic density of Plato's dialogues that we have identified as a presupposition of Neoplatonic hermeneutic practice is, at least for Iamblichus, a density that goes only so far. While allegorical interpretations of details within the prologue to a dialogue or fanciful etymologies of the names of characters are legitimate means of extracting Platonic philosophy from Platonic dialogues, the analysis should not be carried as far as purely syntactic features such as the shapes of the letters that make up the words. Or at least this seems to be the basis of Iamblichus' hostility to Theodore's methods. Iamblichus' own advocacy for theurgic ritual as an indispensible aid to the study of philosophy has given him a reputation for being a "wild" or "spooky" Platonist. Viewed from the perspective of the Theodoran fringe of Neoplatonism, Iamblichus seems a relatively sober philosopher whose Platonism is grounded in a not entirely implausible engagement with Plato's dialogues.

We have noted the tendency among the Neoplatonists to treat Plato's philosophy as mystagogic – not merely conveying information about the cosmos, the human soul and the gods, but somehow initiating the qualified reader and ushering him or her into the presence of the divine. One way in which this mystagogy might actually be effected is through the acquistion of mutually supporting "metaphors to live by" derived from the reading of Plato. That is to say, reading Plato with an authorised hierophant such as Iamblichus or Syrianus removes ways of seeing oneself and the cosmos around you that are grounded in the body and sense experience. Through the master's lectures on Plato one begins to replace these defective ways of seeing with metaphors for living that are more appropriate to incorporeal nature.[21]

21 Baltzly (2014).

O'Meara's chapter on the Emperor Julian considers, among other things, the way in which the philosophical Caesar understood himself and his role in relation to Plato's political works. In a letter to his new emperor, Themistius invited Julian to see himself as the long-delayed realisation of Plato's ambition to install a philosopher as king (adverting not only to the *Republic*, but also to *Epistles* VII and VIII). As O'Meara argues, however, Julian saw fit to understand his relation to the empire much more in terms of Plato's *Laws*. It is true that he understood his obligation to forego the pleasures of uninterupted philosophising in terms of the philosopher-ruler's descent into the cave in the *Republic*. However, O'Meara argues that he also saw himself as a servant and guardian of the laws and that this self-conception derived from immersion in Plato's *Laws*.

The mystagogy of Platonism and the lived experience of immersion in Platonic philosophy also emerges from Addey's chapter on Plato's women readers. It is easy to dismiss the mystagogy of Plato as a Neoplatonic accretion that reflects the god-intoxicated atmosphere of the late Roman Empire rather than anything in Plato. Addey reminds us that we can find the theme of mystagogy in Socrates' description of Diotima and in the structure of the teaching on *eros* that he attributes to her. Her speech involves a purification through elenchus, instruction (including a myth of origin), and finally the vision or *epopteia* of the Beautiful. Plato portrays her as one who understands sacrifices and rituals.[22] Addey surveys the biographical tradition for female philosophers or female readers of Plato.[23] Fraught though this evidence is, there seems little doubt that women in antiquity read Plato since letters by men addressed to them presuppose their acquaintance with the dialogues. Our evidence seldom allows us to know, in their words, how they received Plato's philosophy. But we can say that, at least with respect to the descriptions offered by male writers in the biographical tradition such as Eunapius, Diotima seems to have provided a paradigm for them. Their mastery of the mystagogy of Plato was often coupled with expertise in the rites of the Chaldaeans and the gifts of the seer. Addey's study of Sosipatra is particularly interesting in this regard.[24] If these

22 Nails (2015) argues that Plato's Diotima likely represents a real person – not Plato's literary creation – though she regards her as a priestess rather than a philosopher. In late antiquity the social identity of the philosopher and that of the holy man or woman does not admit of any sharp distinction.

23 It is beyond the scope of her work to draw on epigraphical evidence, but Barnes (2002) argues that philosophers – both male and female – were more prevalent in antiquity than the biographical tradition might suggest.

24 See also Urbano (2013), 245–72, for a comparative study of the biographies of Sosipatra and Macrina.

descriptions resemble the truth, then women were able to fashion themselves and perhaps their understanding of what a female philosopher ought to be like through the image of Plato's Diotima.

It was seemingly at some time in the fourth century that one Calcidius wrote, for a Christian bishop, a translation and partial commentary (arranged according to topics) on the *Timaeus*. As Hoenig here explains, while his work was to become famous and influential it is much more difficult to determine the context in which the writer worked. His references to Numenius and others betray that fact that he often seems more comfortable working with early imperial Platonist ideas than with the Neoplatonists, whose work was becoming a much greater challenge for the Christian community to warm to: particularly no doubt after the principate of Julian. While it seems that he was not ignorant of the Neoplatonist curriculum as encountered in Iamblichus, and while he has often been held to be dependent on Porphyry, Calcidius somehow fits better with the Middle Platonists. He may not have been entirely alone in this, as two Platonists referred to with admiration in Syrianus' *On Hermogenes*, Aquila and Evagoras, may also have been relatively conservative Platonists; it cannot even be presumed that Plutarch of Athens, who refounded the Athenian school and taught Syrianus, had embraced the heritage of Iamblichus with anything like the enthusiasm of Syrianus. Hoenig shows the relative conservatism of Calcidius on such questions as god and fate, and concludes by noting the way in which the translation and commentary complement one another in a project that makes a famous Greek thinker more accessible to a Christian audience with little facility for reading Greek.

From an audience with limited Greek we come to Augustine, an author with limited Greek. While pagan Neoplatonists sought to show the confluence between the philosophy of Plato and other sources of authority, they also acknowledged no *greater* authority than Plato. For Christian Platonists such as Augustine, this is by no means the case. Accordingly their reception of Plato must be distinctly different in this important regard. While it is by no means easy to determine from his extant work whether a writer like Calcidius was a Christian or not, and the same could also be said of Pseudo-Dionysius whose Platonizing work demonstrates a debt to the even unlikelier source of Proclus, at least the western church now took a more independent path, leaving the Greek philosophical traditions more marginalized. While Augustine was much more receptive to the study of pre-Christian ideas than Tertullian, for instance, Augustine presents us with a difficult historical puzzle. There is no mystery about what Greek-speaking philosophers such as Origen or Eusebius knew of Plato's dialogues, but there remains a mystery about how much Augustine knew of Plato's works and how he knew them. Van Riel tackles the perennial

problem of Augustine's knowledge of the works of Plato and the manner in which he saw Plato in relation to "the Platonists". Though we now continue the Neoplatonist story, Augustine will be the last avowedly Christian author in this volume, but *Brill's Companion to Medieval and Modern Platonism* begins here, and will treat others.

Wear's entry on the exegetical methods of Syrianus returns us to the Neoplatonist commentary form and to the themes of semantic density and mystagogy. Damascius' *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* includes some interesting assessments of the methods of two of his predecessors, Syrianus and Iamblichus (I 207.3–9). Damascius deemed Iamblichus' interpretation of the argument from opposites in the *Phaedo* to be too high-flown and removed from the specifics of Plato's text. He contrasted Iamblichus rather unfavourably with Syrianus in this respect. The problem, as Damascius sees it, is that Iamblichus brings the whole of Plato's philosophy to the interpretation of each part. This is perhaps unsurprising since Iamblichus is thought to be responsible for the most explicit articulation of an axiom of Neoplatonic metaphysics: the claim that "all things are in all" (albeit in different modes or manners depending upon the subject). Wear argues that Syrianus and Iamblichus are in agreement that this axiom applies *in a sense* to Plato's dialogues as well, though they do not agree in exactly what sense. Iamblichus regards nearly the totality of the Platonic system as implied in each lemma, as if the Platonic texts external to the specific passage from Plato's *Phaedo* were *already present* in the passage under discussion. Syrianus proceeds more cautiously. It is often necessary to see a specific passage in relation to broader claims in Platonic philosophy in order to *understand the meaning* of the specific passage, though Syrianus is willing to concede that the specific passage, in its local context, does not yet establish the general theses that define Platonism.

But *why* should the understanding of the parts presuppose the understanding of the whole? Wear argues that this is a question to which Syrianus offered an answer: Plato's text is filled with *symbols*. Thus, the attributes such as Whole, Plurality, Likeness considered in the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* are symbols of distinct and ordered levels of divinity on Syrianus' reading of the dialogue (Proclus, *in Parm.* 1061.25–1062.9). But Syrianus' extraction of the meaning behind these symbols pays far greater attention to the details of the text at hand than do the allegorical readings attributed to Iamblichus. Thus, to take another of Wear's examples, Syrianus regards Plato's use of the plural "days and nights" rather than the singular "day and night" at *Tim.* 37e1 as important clues for extracting the theological level of meaning behind the physical one. Plato's dialogues thus exhibit what we have called "semantic

density" because they are symbolic in this way. Syrianus' identification of the symbolic source of their semantic density is perhaps connected with their mystagogic function. The original sense of a *symbolon* was that of a token, that verified the identity of its bearer. Often this was an object broken in two, with the separate halves assigned to the different parties. If a Platonic dialogue, then, contains a *symbolon* of the divine, it contains that which "plugs one in" to the missing half held by the divine, thus authenticating the bearer as one who may be re-united with the gods.

We have chosen to dedicate a separate chapter in this volume to Hermias' *Commentary on the Phaedrus* instead of dealing with it in the chapter on Syrianus. This is not simply because there is scholarly dispute about the degree of dependence of Hermias' work upon the lectures of Syrianus. Rather, it is because the *Phaedrus* becomes a key dialogue in the reception of Plato's philosophy among the Neoplatonists and the commentary of Hermias is the only surviving specimen of its kind. A dialogue like the *Phaedrus* also poses an interesting test case for the Neoplatonic interpretive principles. In particular, *Phaedrus* 264c is the key text by which the Neoplatonists justify their insistence that each dialogue is unified by a unique, single *skopos*. Yet the *Phaedrus* itself discusses a great many topics and philosophers today still disagree about the extent to which it has a unifying theme and what that theme might be. Baltzly and Tarrant focus their discussion not only on Hermias' treatment of the unity of the dialogue and its textual division, but also upon the reflections on the interpretation of myths in Socrates' remarks about the myth of Boreas and Oreithuia mentioned by Phaedrus at 229b. They argues that the narrative at the centre of Socrates' second speech – the journey of souls in company with the gods to the vault of heaven where the intelligibles are glimpsed – was not something that the Neoplatonist regarded as a myth in quite the same sense as the psychic journeys related in the myth of Er in the *Republic* or in the *Gorgias*. Instead, Socrates' palinode was treated by Hermias as inspired speech rather than myth. In addition to the inspired vision of Socrates' second speech, the detail of dramatic setting and characterization in the *Phaedrus* is matched only by the *Symposium*. Hermias' *Commentary* provides us with evidence of the way in which the Neoplatonic reading of these dramatic elements of the dialogue relentlessly related them to the *skopos* and the textual divisions determined by it.

Proclus – along with his fellow-student Hermias and their teacher Syrianus – is the Neoplatonist who best fits the portrait of "the" Neoplatonic reception of Plato that we sketched at the beginning of this introduction. Opsomer's chapter on Proclus amplifies these themes by discussing his practice of composing exhaustive commentaries on Plato's works. Plato's works repay such detailed

attention because, according to Proclus, Plato is the most authoritative theologian and theology is the most important and most difficult topic for the human mind to grasp. The vast gap between our minds in their embodied condition and the superlatively transcendent nature of the divine explains why Plato must resort to so many different modes of communication in order to convey his inspired teachings to us. Opsomer gives careful consideration to Proclus' discussion of the modes through which Plato speaks about the gods. Since Proclus' reception of Plato's dialogues is more or less equivalent to the totality of Proclus' philosophical system, concentrating on the ways in which Proclus supposed Plato to communicate theology to us is the most succinct way of characterising Proclus' reception of Plato. Accordingly Opsomer's chapter concentrates on *how* Proclus supposed that Plato tells us things rather than on *what* Proclus supposed Plato was telling us.

Layne continues with explicitly hermeneutical concerns within the Neoplatonic reception of Plato in her essay on the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*. The *Prolegomena* engages with at least three of the themes we've been examining: Plato as a *dogmatic* philosopher and the *semantic density* of his dialogues. In addition, while the *Prolegomena* does not specifically address the means of Platonic *mystagogy*, it explicitly identifies the aretaic ends of the dialogues within the Iamblichean canon. The author of the *Prolegomena* often elides the difference between the character of Socrates within Plato's dialogues and Plato himself. It is Plato, for instance, who is a midwife of knowledge. But the author of the *Prolegomena* also emphasizes the distinctness of Plato and the historical Socrates in order to better demonstrate the divinity of Plato and his superiority to all other philosophers.[25] While other authors in the Neoplatonic tradition largely assume without much argument that Plato's dialogues contain and communicate Plato's philosophy, the *Prolegomena* explicitly addresses the issue of why Plato writes and whether Socrates' tentative tone or disavowals of knowledge suggest any commitment to skepticism.

We have observed that the semantic density of Plato's dialogues is manifest in their containing layers of meaning corresponding to the hypostases of Neoplatonic metaphysics. The *Prolegomena* explicitly develops the analogy between Platonic dialogues and the cosmos by correlating elements of the dialogues with the six kinds of causes identified by the Neoplatonists. Within the Neoplatonic account of causes, some are more important than others. The *skopos* or unifying theme of the dialogue corresponds to the paradigmatic cause.

25 For the complex reception of the figure of Socrates in the Neoplatonic tradition, see the essays in Layne and Tarrant (2014).

Given the importance and distinctively Platonic provenance of the paradigmatic cause (Proclus, *in Tim.* I 2.5, ff) it is little wonder that the Neoplatonic commentary tradition spends a great deal of time over the correct identification of the *skopos*. The *Prolegomena* is also the clearest source we have on the reading order of the dialogues and their correlations with the grades of virtues. In the cosmos–dialogue analogy, the achievement of the corresponding virtue in the reader plays the role of the final cause or the Good. The exact means through which the dialogue achieves these aretaic ends is unspecified. It is presumably not merely by virtue of the fact that the dialogue *informs* the student about, say, cathartic virtue. The *Prolegomena* indicates the ends of specific Platonic mystagogies, but the means remain mysterious.

There are contexts in which it might be positively advantageous to have agreement that reading Plato promotes the goal of assimilation to the divine, but still leave scope for some measure of disagreement about the specific means through which this might happen. Such is the situation of Olympiodorus described in Michael Griffin's essay. The student body who made up the audience for his lectures in Alexandria was increasingly composed of Christians. Olympiodorus invites them to regard the division that really matters as one between the educated – the *pepaideumenoi* – and the masses. The differences between Christians and Hellenes are unimportant in relation to this more important gap, especially since both share a set of common general concepts. Olympiodorus is particularly keen to provide the myths in Plato's *Gorgias* with allegorical readings in which the references to pagan gods and goddesses are symbols that can be interpreted in terms of this stock of common general concepts. If Plato's dialogues are symbolic and require allegorical interpretation, then the deep truth toward which they point will be a truth common to all sincere and educated forms of spirituality, whether Christian or Hellenic.

Some works of Damascius represent a departure from the themes we have been examining thus far. His commentaries on the *Phaedo* and the *Philebus* largely follow the patterns we have observed in Syrianus and Proclus. While he often winds up subtly disagreeing with his predecessors, the point of raising these interpretive issues is – superficially at least – the extraction of Platonic philosophy from the dialogues. Sara Ahbel-Rappe argues that Damascius' *Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles* pursues a very different goal. Rather than elucidating Plato's text, in this work Damascius seeks to problematise fundamental aspects of the Neoplatonic account of first principles, ending in puzzlement or *aporia*. Abhel-Rappe argues that the comparisons drawn between Damascius' teacher, Isidore, and Socrates in Damascius' *Life of Isidore* provide the real life context for Damascius' aporetic method. Damascius finds value in an aspect of the character of Socrates that his predecessors largely

neglect: the idea that the highest wisdom is the awareness of one's own ignorance. By contrast, Neoplatonists such as Proclus and Hermias overwhelmingly interpret Socrates' professions of ignorance as feigned for the sake of educating pupils such as Alcibiades or Phaedrus. Damascius, however, regards, the state of puzzlement or *aporia* as an appropriate response to confronting first principles that are ineffable and beyond the limits of language. It is not as if Damascius' predecessors would disagree that the first principles are ineffable. But Damascius' philosophical works – at least some of them – seem to evince a somewhat different attitude toward this fact. What is important for Ahbel-Rappe's argument is that the figure of Socrates in the Platonic dialogues can serve as a model for the way in which this attitude could be lived.

The expulsion of Damascius and colleagues from Athens did not mark an end to the influence of the Athenian school. Damascius himself could continue to express himself privately or beyond Byzantine frontiers, and Simplicius in particular adopted a policy of writing in-depth commentaries on Aristotle, who was now perhaps a safer alternative for study than Plato. But for Simplicius Aristotle had been a plank of an essentially Platonist curriculum, and even if "curriculum" was a notion that he now had to abandon, he was still, as Gabor shows, an admirer of Plato, who expressed concern about the haste with which some Aristotelian commentators had rejected Plato without trying to study him thoroughly. He knew a variety of Platonic works, many in some depth, and continued to adhere to a variation of the idea that Plato and Aristotle were is harmony. Simplicius' writings provided posterity, increasingly unable to engage in face-to-face Platonic study, with new opportunities, should it so choose, to ponder not only traditional philosophy but also the issues of Platonic interpretation that have here concerned us.

CHAPTER 14

Origen to Evagrius

Ilaria Ramelli

This chapter points out select instances of how Plato's ideas and dialogues were received, utilized, and interpreted by some major patristic Platonists, from Origen, who aimed at creating an "orthodox" Christian Platonism, to Gregory Nyssen and his disciple Evagrius, with hints also at Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius. The problematic but possible (even probable) identification between Origen the Christian and Origen the Neoplatonist is highly relevant to the reception of Plato in Christian Platonism. The latter, from Clement and especially Origen, through the Cappadocians and Evagrius, down to Eriugena, is part and parcel of the Platonic tradition. In the thought of these Christian Platonists, Plato is scarcely less central than he is in "pagan" Platonists. Their primary authoritative text was Scripture, but Plato's teachings were the same as Scripture's, and Plato was inspired by the same Logos that inspired Scripture. This is why it was natural for them, just as for Philo already, to read Scripture through Platonic lenses.

I The Background: Clement

Before Origen, the reception of Plato in patristic Platonism can be traced to Justin, Bardaisan,[1] and Clement. Here I can only touch upon Clement. Plato is expressly cited in *Strom.* 5.11.73.3–74.2, from *Phdr.* 247c concerning the *hyperouranios* place, Middle-Platonically identified with God ("Plato called God 'the place of the Ideas'"), and *Rep.* VII concerning dialectics, with a long quotation.

Plato is "the philosopher taught by the Hebrews" (*Strom.* 1.1.10.2). The same was suggested by Numenius, who famously described Plato as "a Greek-speaking Moses," and later by Origen, who explained the striking convergences between Plato's ideas and Scripture – read through philosophical allegoresis – with the hypothesis that Plato was acquainted with the "Jewish philosophy" (*CC* 4.39: see below). Likewise, Clement *Strom.* 1.28.176.1–3 deems Plato's metaphysics

1 On Bardaisan as a Middle Platonist see Ramelli (2009b) and (forthcoming a).

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and philosophy dependent on "the Mosaic philosophy," as already Philo called it. Here Clement also quotes Plato's definition of dialectics in *Plt.* 287a. The "mysteries" of Plato's theology also apply to Christian theology, which Clement represents as the culmination of the Mosaic philosophy.[2] In *Strom.* 5.14.90, Clement lists examples of the dependence of Greek philosophy on the Mosaic philosophy, including Plato's ideas about otherworldly punishments and rewards.

While Christianity was negotiating itself as philosophy,[3] Clement programmatically declared that his *Stromateis* expounded the doctrines of the main philosophical schools (αἱρέσεις, *Strom.* 1.1.15.2). Like Origen after him,[4] Clement was convinced that Greek philosophy, and especially Plato's, contained many good elements (although not all directly "edible": *Strom.* 1.1.7.2–3), because it was inspired by the same Logos who is Christ, God's Logos. Therefore, Clement emphasized the importance of philosophy in the formation of Christians (*Strom.* 1.5.31). The object of rational investigation is truth, identified with Christ. This is why Clement, like Justin and Origen, can conceive of Christianity as philosophy and value Greek philosophy as an indispensable preparation for Christianity. The perfect Christian philosopher, the "gnostic", learns the divine mysteries from God's Logos (*Strom.* 7.1.4.3).

God's Son is the perfect manifestation of the divine Logos, which had partial manifestations in Greek philosophy and the traditions of several peoples. Such manifestations were given in symbols (*Strom.* 5.4.19.3–4.21) – the appropriate way of expression of the mystery of a divinity that, for Clement as for the Middle Platonists, is transcendent and ineffable. Like Justin, who seems to have been the first to use "philosophy" in reference to Christianity,[5] Clement describes Christianity as βάρβαρος φιλοσοφία (*Strom.* 2.11.25) and true philosophy.[6] This position will be developed not only, most notably, by Origen, but also by his follower Eusebius (*PE* 1.4.10). Clement did not use θεολογία in reference to Christianity for the same reason why Origen disliked ἀλληγορία: θεολογία smacked too much of "paganism", since it was used in connection with the philosophical allegoresis of "pagan" myths and rituals.

The philosophers' ideas for Clement did contain seeds of truth, and Greek philosophy was a valid preparation for Christianity.[7] The Greeks received

2 Ramelli (2016b)

3 Ramelli (2015b).

4 Demonstration in Ramelli (2013a), 137–215.

5 *Apology* 2.12.5; *Dialogue with Trypho* 8.

6 *Strom.* 1.1.21.28.156; 2.7.54.

7 *Strom.* 1.1–9.021; 6.7–8.

"certain sparkles of the divine Logos," albeit they did not reach the full flame (*Protrepticus* 7.74.7). Particularly Plato speaks "as though he were inspired" (*Strom.* 1.8.42.1); he and the other philosophers derived from "Moses" the truths of their philosophy.[8] In support of the anteriority of the Mosaic philosophy to Greek philosophy Clement nominally invoked Philo and Aristobulus,[9] to conclude that "the whole of Greek wisdom derived from barbarian philosophy."[10] Greek philosophy is, "in a way, providential" (*Strom.* 1.1.18.4). Clement quotes Numenius – later praised by Origen – who, as mentioned, described Plato as "a Greek-speaking Moses" (*Strom.* 1.22.150.4).

Philosophy is useful in refuting heresies. In *Strom.* 1.19.95–96, Clement interprets Prov 27:10, "A friend nearby is better than a brother living far away," identifying friends with philosophers and brothers with heretics. The source of heresy is not philosophy, as many heresiologists maintained, but the wrong interpretation of Scripture (*Strom.* 7.16.97.4). The same will be held by Origen, who accused "heretics" such as Marcionites and "Gnostics" of exegetical faults.

Philosophy is the quest for truth, and Christ is Truth (*Strom.* 1.5.32.4). Plato's ideal of assimilation to God and the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* are in perfect accord with Scripture and were actually already found in Scripture. The philosophers who incarnated virtue are potentially Christian and "martyrs" of – i.e. witnesses to – the Logos, since their prototype is Christ-Logos.[11] Plato hinted at the Trinity, Empedocles at the resurrection; Plato pointed to ways leading to the knowledge of God and is in agreement with Paul.[12]

The Logos spoke through the prophets and Greek philosophers, and finally directly, when it became incarnate (*Paedagogus* 1.7.58.1). Greeks, Jews, and Christians "have known the same God: the Greeks according to paganism, the Jews according to Judaism, and the Christians according to the Spirit" (*Strom.* 6.5.41.6–7). The conviction that the Divinity expresses itself in Scripture should exhort Christians to research, making them "zetetic" (a key concept for Origen later). Such rational investigation confirms faith. Truth is expressed in symbols, that exegetes may exert their minds in the effort of interpretation.[13] Many philosophers "expressed philosophical ideas symbolically" (*Strom.* 5.9.56), but Plato most of all – a line later followed by Eusebius. Clement interprets the words of Miriam's canticle, "He triumphed with glory … threw into

8 *Strom.* 2.1.1; 6.3.28.

9 *Strom.* 1.15.72.4; 5.14.97.7.

10 *Strom.* 5.14.140.2; 6.7.55.3–4.

11 *Strom.* 2.19–22; cf. 4.1–9.

12 *Strom.* 3.3.18.1–2; 5.14.

13 *Strom.* 5.4.24; 6.15.126.2.

the sea both horse and knight" (*Ex* 15:1–21) in reference to reason that overcomes passions, with a reminiscence of Plato's *Phaedrus* and the injunction for the charioteer to control the horse representing the soul's concupiscent faculty (*Strom.* 5.10.52–53).

Christians had to ground their doctrines philosophically and develop a Logos theology, which identified Christ with God's preexistent Logos. This operation, after the Johannine Prologue, continued with Justin, most Valentinians, Clement, and especially Origen, and all of Patristic philosophy, which largely depends on Origen, primarily Gregory Nyssen.[14]

Clement's concept of the Logos being "all realities as One" must be seen against the backdrop of Middle Platonism, in which the Logos is the seat of the Ideas (the intelligible cosmos), which are the paradigms of reality, and joins them all in unity. In Middle Platonism, Plato's Ideas had become thoughts of God, located in God's mind, i.e. God's Logos. For Christian Middle Platonists, such as Bardaisan and Clement, God's Logos is Christ; therefore, Christ/Logos is the place of all Ideas and unifies them – God's Logos being "all things as One". In *Strom.* 4.25.155.2–157.2 Clement observes that, according to Plato, the *nous* is like a divinity able to contemplate the Ideas and the invisible God, and inhabits humans (4.25.155.2). The *nous* is "the seat of the Ideas," and is itself God, as "God is *nous*."

The soul depicted by Plato, absorbed in the contemplation of the Ideas and detached from the sensible world, is assimilated by Clement to an angel who is with Christ (4.25.155.2). Clement, building up the equation, "soul: Ideas = angel: Christ," draws a parallel, not only between the soul and an angel, but also between the Ideas and Christ, due to his concept of Christ-Logos as seat of all Ideas. Indeed, Clement describes the Logos as Wisdom, Science, and Truth (4.25.156.1), intelligible and knowable, unlike the Father. The Son is the sum and unification of all spiritual powers, "*all in one*": "all the powers of the spirit taken together, transformed into one single thing, end up into the same being: the Son" (4.25.156.1). They "concur to constitute the Son," so the Son is the sum of all spiritual *dynameis*,[15] probably assimilated by Clement to the Ideas in the Logos and the angels. But the Son is "not determined" by the *ennoia* of each of his "powers": Christ-Logos is not merely the sum total of all these *dynameis*, but transcends them in a superior unity.

My contention is supported by Clement's explication immediately afterwards: "Indeed, the Son is not simply "one thing" as one thing, nor "many

14 Ramelli (2015b).

15 Ramelli (2016a) and (2017c).

things" as parts of a sum, but *One as All Things*" (4.25.156.2). The Logos is the unity of multiplicity that transcends the many (the many *dynameis*, but also the many Ideas, the *logoi*, or the *logika*: these implications will be developed by Origen) and makes them one: "Hence also all things, for the Son is the circle that *embraces all the powers*, which are encircled and *unified into one.*" The Logos is the principle of all things, as it embraces all them in a superior unity, and also because it is the main agent of creation. "For this reason the Logos is said to be the Alpha and the Omega,[16] because only in his case *does the end coincide with the beginning*; the Logos ends with the first principle, without admitting of any interruption at any point" (4.25.157.1). The Logos, being God, has no duality, no multiplicity, no division, but it resolves every division and unifies multiplicity, according to the Platonic ideal of unity, of which Christian Platonists made so much.[17]

II Select Examples from Origen (with a Hint at Eusebius)

Origen († 255ca.) develops Clement's conception of the Logos being "One as All" by observing that, whereas the Father is "absolutely simply One," Christ-Logos is "One through the many" and "One as All" (*C.Jo.* 1.20.119). Christ is said to be "the first and the last" in Revelation (Origen clearly had in mind Clement's passage) because he is the first, the last, and all in between, as Christ-Logos is "all things" (*C.Jo.* 1.31.219). Christ is "all in all" (*C.Jo.* 1.31.225). The Platonic unity/multiplicity dialectic is clear in this initial section of *C.Jo.*, where Origen describes Christ as one, yet having many *epinoiai*, here discussed. Christ-Logos-Wisdom is one and "a multitude of goods".

Thanks to Origen, who may well have been the same as "Origen the Neoplatonist",[18] Christianity acquired a strong philosophical (mainly Platonic) foundation and could no longer be charged with being a religion for ἄλογοι. He intended to create an "orthodox" Christian Platonism, against "pagan" and "Gnostic" Platonisms and against pantheistic Stoicism and "atheistic" philosophies (Epicureanism and perhaps Aristotelianism, which denied providence on earth and the soul's immortality). Origen was criticized within

16 *Rev.* 1:8; 22:13.

17 Ramelli (2013b).

18 The identification is considered possible, e.g., by Cadiou (1935), 231–40; Hanson (1954), 1–30; Crouzel (1956); Kettler (1979); Böhm (2002); Beatrice (1992), 351 and (2009), 531; DePalma Digeser (2012), 18, 51 and *passim*; Johnson (2013), 153 n.30; Tzamalikos (2016), 2–4; Ramelli (2009a), (2011), and with further arguments in (2017a) and (2018).

Christianity for being a philosopher, and from "pagan" philosophers for being a Christian. He defended his identity of Christian philosopher before his fellow-Christians.[19] He introduced themes and methodologies from Greek philosophy into Christian thought: e.g. allegoresis and the "zetetic", heuristic method of philosophy applied to biblical exegesis. Taking Scripture, read through the lens of Platonism, as his textual authority, Origen mirrored the exegetical method of contemporary Platonists.[20] Origen imported the οὐκ ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν formula ("there was no time when *x* was not"), never before used in Christianity, from the cosmological debates of imperial philosophy into Christology, where it became a catchphrase in the anti-"Arian" controversy.[21] He based himself on imperial philosophy to construct his innovative notion of "hypostasis" (ὑπόστασις) as individual substance, as opposed to a common οὐσία.[22]

Origen devised the plan of his *First Principles* (Περὶ ἀρχῶν) as a philosopher; there was no precedent in Christian writings, but there was a περὶ ἀρχῶν tradition in Greek philosophy.[23] His "principles" are the three Hypostases of the Trinity (*Princ.* 1.4.3: *archiken ... Trinitatem*). With these Origen begins his masterpiece, and they reappear as three ἀρχικαὶ ὑποστάσεις in Eusebius and in the title given by Porphyry to Plotinus' tenth treatise. For Origen, God, the "Principle" of all, replaces Middle Platonism's three principles (God, matter, and forms), but is triune – still involving three principles.

Likewise, to build an "orthodox" Christian Platonism, Origen developed his *apokatastasis* doctrine from his polemic against "Gnostic" predestinationism. The tenet of human freewill informed Origen's *apokatastasis* theory, as is manifest in *Princ.* 3. Here he begins by criticizing "Valentinian" determinism, arguing that Scripture, as a coherent whole, teaches freewill, rebutting the Marcionite and "Gnostic" separation of the Old from the New Testament and of God's goodness from God's justice. This premise enables the restoration of all rational creatures after purification and illumination – the triumph of God's goodness and justice together. *Apokatastasis* is grounded in theodicy and the defense of freewill against predestination, as Rufinus was aware (*Ap.Hier.* 2.12). Origen countered determinism and casualism (*Princ.* 3.5.5) to support freewill,

19 *Ap.* Eus. *HE* 6.19.14; *H.Ier.* 20.5.

20 I argue in a forthcoming essay that the Platonist Amelius probably read John's Prologue in light of Origen's exegesis.

21 Ramelli (2014a).

22 Ramelli (2012) argues thoroughly that the theory may even have influenced Porphyry, who projected Origen's concept of hypostasis onto Plotinus, whose use of ὑπόστασις is not technical.

23 See Ramelli (2009a).

and, as in Plato's Myth of Er, to which he often appealed regarding virtue having no master and God having no responsibility for evil, theodicy was Origen's primary concern in his polemic against determinism.

Origen criticized "pagan" and "Gnostic" imperial Platonism, as well as non-Platonic, unsatisfactory philosophies, but not Plato, whom he admired and on whose tenets he built his Christian Platonism. Origen did not embrace *metensomatosis*, which, entailing the eternity of the world, was incompatible with Scripture, but Plato himself alluded to it only mythically. In *C.Jo.* 6.85 Origen contrasted *metensomatosis* – implying that a soul enters different bodies – with *ensomatosis*, his own, Christian doctrine, implying that a soul uses one single body, which will be transformed according to the soul's state. Porphyry, by contrast, a supporter of *metensomatosis* and acquainted with Origen's work, will use – possibly in polemic with Origen – ἐμψύχωσις, "animation" of a body,[24] a rare term, employed only once by Plotinus (*Enn.* IV 3.9) and once by Galen (4.763), and μετεμψύχωσις, transmigration of souls (*Abst.* 4.16). He never uses ἐνσωμάτωσις or μετενσωμάτωσις.[25]

Origen stopped teaching literature (Eus. *HE* 6.3.8–9), but never stopped teaching philosophy,[26] and we know from his disciple Theodore-Gregory that he used the Socratic method of questioning and argumentation with his students. He regarded philosophy as most valuable (*C.Cant.* 2.1.28), although even the best of pre-Christian philosophy, Plato's, was unable to remove sin (ibid. 2.5.30), because to this end divine grace is needed. Origen acknowledged the philosophers' temperance and wisdom (*H.Ier.* 5.4) and revealed his strategy: he often expounded Christian philosophy to "pagans" harboring anti-Christian prejudices, without presenting it as Christian; only after persuading them *rationally* and winning them over does he disclose that this is "the Christian *logos*" (*H.Ier.* 20.5) – that to which Celsus had opposed his *True Logos*.

Origen saw in Scripture many philosophical doctrines, chiefly Platonic. Most of the premises of his *apokatastasis* theory are based on both: he adduced Scripture to support Platonism, but a Scripture that teaches the same as Plato. Origen's theology was part and parcel, and the culmination, of philosophical inquiry, based on Scripture and Plato, because for Origen Plato was inspired by Scripture or by the same Logos that is "incarnate" in Scripture. This is why theology cannot be studied without philosophy (*C.Cant.* prol. 3.1–3). Thus, in Origen's masterpiece of Christian philosophy, *First Principles*, theology is studied on philosophical foundations, and biblical exegesis is incorporated

24 *ad Gaur* 2.4; 11.1–3.

25 Plotinus used μετενσωμάτωσις (*Enn.* II 9.6; IV 3.9), but never Origen's term ἐνσωμάτωσις.

26 Ramelli (2009a).

into philosophical inquiry (Book 4). Origen in the Prologue programmatically opens to philosophical investigation the issues left unclear by Scripture.

The soul must stick to reason and faith together (*C.Cant.* 2.10.7): no faith without reason, because Christianity is philosophy. Faith and reason, Scripture and Plato, cannot really diverge, since Christ is Logos. After mentioning theology as philosophy's culmination, Origen claims that Greek philosophers drew inspiration from Solomon's wisdom (*C.Cant.* prol. 3.4). Scripture precedes philosophy, but its teaching coincides with the best of it, namely Plato.

Indeed, Origen often embraces, and presents as true philosophical doctrines, Plato's theories. For instance, in *C.Jo.* 2.182, Origen calls "the general theory concerning the soul" what in fact was the Platonic doctrine, and accepts it (albeit with a proviso): "that the soul is not sown together with the [mortal] body, but preexists it and is later clothed with flesh and blood for various causes". Also, Origen appropriates Plato's definition of God as "the father of the universe" (*Princ.* 1.3.1), presenting this theological tenet as typical of those philosophies which posited providence.[27] Origen criticized the Peripatetics precisely for rejecting providence (*CC* 3.75). Here he states that to turn people to the true philosophy one must turn them away from false ones, specifically Aristotelianism, Stoicism and Epicureanism,[28] but *not Platonism*. Origen refrains from including Plato's school among false philosophies. Moreover, his criticisms of false philosophies were valid not only from the Christian, but also from the Platonic perspective: the denial of providence, hedonism, and theological materialism were all unacceptable to Platonism. Likewise, in *CC* 2.13 Origen accuses Epicureans of denying providence, Aristotelians of maintaining that prayers are useless,[29] and Aristotle himself of repudiating Plato's doctrines of the soul's immortality and of the Ideas, both of which Origen embraced.

Origen sided with Plato and as a Christian Platonist criticized the other philosophical schools. As I suggest elsewhere,[30] Origen represented the Platonist Celsus as an Epicurean mainly because he was more at ease attacking disciples of Epicurus than of Plato. Eusebius was following Origen when, aiming at establishing the Christian philosophy,[31] in *PE* 11–15 he criticized Greek

27 This also included Stoicism, against Epicureanism and Aristotelianism.

28 Stoicism for its material conception of the divinity, Epicureanism for hedonism and for denying providence.

29 See also *Or.* 5.1.

30 Ramelli (2018), Ch. 1.

31 *PE* 14.22.17; *DE* 1.6.56; *PE* 12.32.7. On Eusebius' Platonism see Karamanolis (2014): I only doubt that "Celsus criticized Origen for misunderstanding Plato" (178), since Celsus lived before Origen.

philosophical schools such as Epicureanism, Stoicism, Skepticism, and Aristotelianism, but praised Plato's philosophy (*PE* 11–13), declaring it "the true philosophy" (*C.Hier.* 45.4) and "superior to all" (*PE* 11 prol. 3), and Plato himself "marvelous, extraordinary".[32] Eusebius and Origen agreed on the reason for Plato's superiority: Plato "followed the philosophy of the Hebrews", either by hearing/reading it or by being directly inspired by God-Logos.[33] The very few Platonic doctrines rejected by Eusebius are those dropped by Origen, especially *metensomatosis* (*PE* 13.16).

If the Christian Middle-Neoplatonist Origen was the homonymous Neoplatonist – also a disciple of Ammonius – of whom Porphyry (in his *Life of Plotinus*), Hierocles and Proclus speak, he is reported to have expounded Ammonius' ideas in *On Spirits* and *The King Is the Only Creator.* Many details would support the attribution of these treatises to Origen the Christian,[34] besides the full correspondence of the latter's title with Origen's *Selecta in Psalmos* (*Catenae*) PG 12.1560.42: God's "creative kingship governs all". Origen here, and in his treatise, may have confronted Numenius, one of his favorite sources, who had distinguished the King from the Creator, identifying the former with the first God (who creates nothing) and the latter with the second.[35]

Plato was the first of the Christian Origen's favorite readings, as Porphyry attests (*ap.* Eus. *HE* 6.19.8): "*He was always with Plato*." He consistently engaged in the interpretation of Plato's dialogues, and was committed to their allegorization. The interpretations of Plato that Proclus attributes to Origen in his commentary on the *Timaeus* are easily associated with the Christian philosopher, all the more so since at school Origen explained the works of Greek philosophers, with Plato having special prominence (Eus. *HE* 6.17).

In the fourth century CE, Didymus wrote the first commentary on Origen's *On Principles*, thereby conferring on it the same status enjoyed by Plato's dialogues. Beforehand, mainly commentaries on Plato and Aristotle had been produced, or, in Jewish and Christian Platonism, commentaries on Scripture read through Platonism, such as Philo's and Origen's. In the *Commentary on John*, particularly in the interpretation of the Johannine Prologue, Origen's engagement with the Platonic tradition stands out as unique among Christian commentaries on Scripture. Plotinus' colleague Amelius also engaged in a philosophical exegesis of the Johannine Prologue, and he and Numenius appear to be the only non-Christian Platonists who offered a philosophical

32 *PE* 11.8.1; 11.9.5.

33 *PE* 11 prol. 2; 11.8.1.

34 Ramelli (2009a), (2011a) and (2018).

35 On Numenius' theology see the chapter by Athanassiadi.

interpretation of New Testament writings. As I argue in a separate paper, Amelius' exegesis of John, preserved by Eusebius, suggests that he read John's Prologue in light of Origen's commentary. This helps explain his claim that John, "the Barbarian", posited the Logos as principle (ἀρχή).

Just as Amelius could indulge in the exegesis of Christian scriptures, likewise Origen could interpret Plato's dialogues, such as *Republic* and *Timaeus*. Proclus, in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, reports how an Origen engaged in the interpretation of Plato and often dissented from the "philologist" Longinus.[36] This Origen, not implausibly identified with the Christian, resorted to the allegoresis of Plato – the same kind of exegesis at work in Origen's scriptural commentaries. Indeed, even in treatises of undisputed attribution, such as *Contra Celsum*, Origen manifested a great appreciation of Plato's myths from the methodological viewpoint, and drew a close epistemological parallel between Platonic and Scriptural myths, thus requiring the same philosophical exegesis.

Proclus in the first passage (*In Tim.* I 31.19–32) reports a debate on the *skopos* of Plato's *Republic*. Longinus and Origen disagreed on what kind of *politeia* Socrates/Plato deals with. According to Longinus, it was the middle *politeia*, since its guardians were soldiers; according to Origen, the first, because its guardians were educated in various disciplines, the liberal arts. These were paramount in the Christian Origen's formation and teaching. He obviously stressed their importance also in Plato's *Republic*, which thus symbolizes a state of knowledge and the government of souls. Another disagreement between Longinus and Origen (*In Tim.* I 162.15–30) concerned the local factors promoting the good condition of soul. For Longinus, it depends on climate; for Origen, on the circular movement of the sky. Origen based his argument on the exegesis of *Rep.* VIII 546a. Other passages in Proclus about Origen the Neoplatonist are also suggestive of the philosophic, philological, rhetorical, ethical, and literary interests of the Christian Origen.[37]

While Longinus deemed Plato's myths ornamental or psychagogical, Proclus's Origen deemed them endowed with gnoseological value and, like Plato's metaphors, not intended to produce pleasure (*In Tim.* I 83.19–28, 86.20–87.6).

36 Longinus mentions this Origen as a Platonist philosopher whom he had known when young; he praises him and Ammonius as "by far superior to all their contemporaries in intelligence" (*ap.* Porph. *V.Plot.* 20). Longinus, probably born in 212 CE, may thus have frequented the Christian Platonist's school at Caesarea in the 230s. The same Origen is cited at *V.Plot.* 14, again as author of a work *On Spirits*.

37 See *In Tim.* I 60.1–12, 68.12–15, 83.19–28, 86.20–87.6, 93.8–15, all analysed in Ramelli (2017b) 102–104.

This perfectly corresponds to Origen the Christian's anti-hedonistic ethics, characterized by the ideal of *apatheia*. Proclus also notes the affinity of Origen's position with Numenius, whom Origen the Christian read assiduously. Proclus also mentions Origen's interpretation of the Atlantis myth (I 76.31–77.9).[38] Origen favored an allegorization of Plato's myth, but not one concerning the cosmos as Amelius thought, but one about spirits (*daimones*), good or evil. Rational creatures were at the core of Origen's protology, eschatology, and theodicy. He read Plato's Atlantis myth (an originally happy state of a population destroyed by a catastrophe) in reference to rational creatures' original life before the fall. These are called here *daimones* as in the title of a treatise in which Origen had disclosed Ammonius's teachings. It was typical of Origen the Christian to allegorize cosmological descriptions in reference to spirits (e.g. the "upper waters" in Genesis as good spirits, the inferior waters as evil spirits). So Origen's spiritualization of Scripture's cosmological myth parallels Origen the Neoplatonist's spiritualization of Plato's myth of cosmic catastrophe. Indeed, the Christian Origen read exclusively allegorically both Plato's protological and eschatological myths and the Bible's protological and eschatological narratives. This also, among much else, suggests the identification of the two. Proclus' interpretation of the framework of the *Timaeus* myth as the expression of a double creation parallels Origen's double creation scheme: Proclus observes that the myth recounted by the Egyptian priest describes the "more ancient" act of creation, where all forms were in harmony, while Solon's knowledge, concerning constantly changing situations, is the "later" creation of the physical world in continuous flux (*Tim.* 28f). Origen precisely described physical realities as in constant flux.

In Tim. I 63.25–64.7, based on Porphyry, again features Origen refusing to take Plato literally. The question was whether Plato included Homer among the "ancient poets" deemed incapable of reporting the Atlantine war adequately at *Timaeus* 19d. Origen was at pains for three days trying to solve it. The description of Origen's sweating and sustained mental and physical effort corresponds to Origen the Christian's image as exceptional hard-worker, to which he owes the title Philoponos or Philoponotatos in Athanasius and Eusebius, who often emphasized Origen's labors,[39] and Adamantios. In Proclus, Porphyry attests that Origen lauded Homer's poetry and its ability to depict

38 *Tim.* was well known to Origen, who, like Philo and Bardaisan, read *Genesis* in its light. See Ramelli (2009a), and for Bardaisan's interpretation of the *Timaeus* (2009b).

39 *HE* 6.2.7;9; 6.3,7;13;11; 6.8.6; 6.15.11, etc. The epithet Philoponotatos is used at *Eclogae Propheticae* 3.6. Origen himself, even in his homilies, stressed how hard he worked.

courageous deeds, thus accepting Plato's challenge (*Rep.* 607e) to defenders of poetry to show that it is not only sweet, but beneficial to regimes and human life. This attitude toward Homer in Proclus indeed corresponds to Origen the Christian's attitude. In extant Greek works, he mentions Homer over thirty times, never in Biblical commentaries or homilies, but only in *Against Celsus*, where his interlocutor is a "pagan" Middle Platonist. In *CC* 7.6.28–37 Origen calls Homer "the best of poets" and adduces his ideas on *daimones* – the object of Origen's treatise based on Ammonius – to support his own argument. At *CC* 6.7.2 he again praises Homer for the edifying contents of his poems, adding that morally elevated messages are also found in Moses.[40] Yet he thought that Plato was right to exclude from his state poets who corrupted the young, such as Hesiod in *Theogony* (cf. 7.54.16).

Origen the Christian appreciated Plato's myths methodologically and drew an epistemological parallel between Plato's and Scripture's protological and eschatological myths.[41] These are endowed with an *exclusively allegorical/symbolic* sense, being deprived of literal/historical meaning. The rest of Scripture, and of Plato's dialogues, have both a literal and an allegorical or noetic meaning: Origen's twofold exegesis reflects the Platonic pattern of two levels of reality, which he highlights even in a biblical commentary, *C.Cant.* 2.8.17. God's anthropomorphisms, incongruities, and impossibilities have "bare spiritual meanings", to indicate that it is necessary to search for deeper senses: "Sometimes even impossible things are prescribed by the Law, for the sake of those more expert and particularly fond of *investigation*, that, applying themselves to the toil of the *examination* of Scriptures, they may be *persuaded by reason* that in Scriptures it is necessary to look for a meaning worthy of God" (*Princ.* 4.2.9). Here, as often, Origen applies the terminology of philosophical investigation to exegesis, because Scriptural allegoresis, like the allegorization of Plato, is part of *philosophy* – as allegoresis of myths was for the Stoics.[42] Thus, Origen included his theorization of Scriptural allegoresis in his *philosophical* masterpiece.

In Origen, as in Plato, the narratives of creation and eschatology are subject to special hermeneutical rules, escaping the literal + allegorico-noetic double exegesis. In *C.Cant* prol. Origen insists that *Genesis* 1–3 must be studied only after the rest of Scripture, since the account of creation can be interpreted *only* allegorically. Origen was likely inspired by Plato for his exclusively allegorical interpretation of the protological and eschatological narratives. Origen overtly praised Plato's myths, knowing that Plato could only offer mythical,

40 On Origen's attitude towards Homer see Ramelli (2011a).

41 Ramelli (2014b).

42 See Ramelli (2011b).

not theoretical, protological and eschatological accounts. Origen may seem to have corrected Plato's notion of "incurable" souls, which contravened universal restoration. For Plato, souls that have committed gravest evils, being "incurable", cannot be healed through suffering and restored to contemplation, but are eternally tormented in Tartarus (*Phd.* 113e2; *Grg.* 525c2; *Rep.* 615e3). Origen replies that no being is incurable for its Creator, Christ-Logos (*Princ.* 3.6.5), but more than a correction of Plato this will be a correction of the deterministic use of Plato's category of incurable souls by contemporary "Gnostic" and "pagan" Platonists.[43]

Origen reflected on the epistemological status of Plato's myths, praising Plato because he resorted to myths to hide the truth from "the majority". Origen quotes Plato's Poros myth (*Symp.* 203b-e) and remarks that its readers will either understand it literally and deride it, which Christians shouldn't do given Plato's greatness, or allegorize it, knowing that Plato veiled his thought behind myths to reveal it only to philosophers: "If they *investigate philosophically the contents expressed mythically*, and can thereby *discover what Plato meant*, they will see how he could hide under the appearance of myth those doctrines which seemed to him especially sublime, due to the majority, and at the same time revealed them, as is fit, to *those who know how to discover* from myths what the author meant concerning *the truth*" (*CC* 4.39). Origen presents again allegoresis as a *philosophical* exercise, be it applied to Scriptural or Platonic myths. If Christians did what Celsus does with Scripture's myths – refusing to read them allegorically – they would deride Plato, but if they examine philosophically what is said mythically and discover what Plato meant, they will admire Plato's allegory – as "pagan" Platonists should admire Scripture's allegory. Origen thus claims for Scripture the same status as Plato's dialogues.

Soon after, he assimilates Plato's Poros myth to Scripture's Paradise story: "I reported this myth in Plato because Zeus' garden therein seems to have *something very similar* to God's garden, Penia can be *assimilated* to the serpent in the garden, and Poros, the victim of Penia's plot, to the human being, the victim of the serpent's plot". This assimilation is not only found in Origen's debate with the Middle Platonist Celsus, but was further developed in his Commentary on Genesis: "Now it was not the right occasion for going through both Plato's myth and the story of the serpent and God's garden and what happened there according to Scripture. For *I have already treated all this in depth, as the main subject, in my commentary on Genesis*" (*CC* 4.39). There, Origen extensively compared Plato's and Genesis' myths. In *C.Cant.* prol. 2.1, Origen praises

43 See Ramelli (2018).

Plato's *Symposium*, and assimilates Hesiod's Pandora myth to the Genesis creation of the woman: both must be allegorized (*CC* 4.38). The Genesis story of humanity's receiving the "skin tunics" has only symbolic meanings, which Origen assimilates to the symbolic meaning of Plato's myth of the soul's descent (*CC* 4.40). He read so much of Plato's myths into Christian doctrine as to use Plato's mythical terminology. Note particularly his use of the verb for losing one's wings (πτερορρυέω, *Phdr.* 246c, 248c) – while expounding his Christian view of rational creatures' fall after Satan's: "evil came about from the fact that some rational beings *lost their wings* and followed the first who had *lost his wings*" (*CC* 6.43).

In *CC* 4.39 Origen *explained* the similarities between Scripture's and Plato's myths: during his sojourn in Egypt Plato encountered adherents of "the Jews' philosophy." From this stemmed what Origen described as Christian philosophy. Thus, Origen considered Scriptural allegoresis a *philosophical* task, already performed by Jewish exegetes. He observes that Celsus' attack on Biblical allegoresis is directed against not only Christian, but also *Jewish* allegorists, such as Philo and Aristobulus (*CC* 4.51), deliberately ignored by Platonists who delegitimized Scriptural allegoresis (Celsus and, later, Porphyry).

I have argued that Proclus' Origen, allegorizer of Plato, may have been the same as the Christian Origen allegorizer of Plato and Scripture. In this case, Proclus valued the exegesis of Plato by a Christian Platonist and regarded Origen's "Ammonian" writings as part of an authoritative Neoplatonist body of texts. But he knew also Christian philosophical texts by Origen such as Περὶ ἀρχῶν and the Commentary on John, likely known also to Amelius and certainly to Porphyry. Hierocles and Proclus, indeed, refer to doctrines expressed in Περὶ ἀρχῶν, not just in Origen's "Ammonian" treatises which could be attributed to the "pagan" Origen.[44] Conversely, Porphyry F39 ascribes Greek doctrines to the Christian Origen in metaphysics and theology ("in his view of the existing realities and God [τὰς περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ τοῦ θείου δόξας] his thoughts were those of a Greek") – the same to which Hierocles and Proclus refer. Porphyry, Hierocles, and Proclus esteemed Origen as a philosopher, albeit disagreeing on some points, and Porphyry and Proclus adopted some of Origen's technical concepts.[45] Significantly, Justinian disliked both Origen's legacy and the Neoplatonists. If Proclus' Origen is Porphyry's Origen, we see in Neoplatonism the reception of a de-Christianized Origen whose exegesis of Plato was respected.

44 Arguments in Ramelli (2009a), (2011a), (2017a) and (2018).

45 Ramelli (2012) on Porphyry, and (2015c) on Proclus, who may have had Origen's ideas at the back of his mind when speaking of apokatastasis and of perpetual first bodies.

III Select Points in Nyssen

Gregory Nyssen was the most philosophically minded of the Cappadocians[46] and Origen's most insightful follower. His reception of Plato, often filtered through Middle/Neoplatonism and Christian Platonism, is rich; here I can address only few examples. One prominent is Gregory's Christianization of Plato's *Phaedo* in his philosophical dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*,[47] inspired also by Plato's *Symposium*: Macrina's main character, Gregory's "professor", is modeled on Plato's Socrates[48] and Diotima. Her arguments demonstrate the soul's immortality, like Plato, and the right understanding of the resurrection, the τέλος of which is the eventual restoration (*apokatastasis*) of all humans to their original perfection.

Already in *De Virginitate* 10–11 Gregory had emulated Plato's *Symposium*, particularly his Ladder of Love. Beforehand, the Middle Platonist Bardaisan, well known to Porphyry and Nyssen and probably to Origen, had emulated Plato's dialogues,[49] and Methodius, who knew Origen and was known to Gregory, offered a Christian remake of Plato's *Symposium*.

Additionally, a number of philosophical themes in Gregory derive from Plato, such as the claim, already appropriated by Clement and Origen, that virtue admits of no masters (is something *adespoton*) and God is not responsible for human moral choices – which became the principle of theodicy (*Rep.* 617e). Gregory even reinterprets the parable in Matt 18:23–25 and Luke 7:41 in light of Plato's tenet: after purification from sin, and the shedding of the shame deriving from debts, souls in the future world can achieve freedom.

> Now, freedom is assimilation to what has no master and is endowed with absolute power, and at the beginning it was given us by God, but then it was covered and hidden by the shame of debts. Thus, consequently, everything that is free will adapt to what is similar to it; but virtue has no master [is *adespoton*]: therefore, everything that is free will turn out to be in virtue, since what is free has no master [is *adespoton*]. But God's nature is the source of all virtue; so, in it there will be those who have attained freedom from evil, that … "God may be all in all."[50]

46 For the reception of Plato in the Cappadocians see Bradshaw (2014).

47 Ramelli (2007).

48 On the reception of Socrates in Neoplatonism (but not in Christian Neoplatonism) see Layne and Tarrant (2014).

49 Ramelli (forthcoming a).

50 1 Cor 15:28.

The end will be the realization of all humans' freedom, in virtue and in God, when all have rejected evil.

Gregory's concept of *adespoton*, inspired by Plato and read in light of the "theology of the image" (based on Gen 1:27), is pivotal. Gregory emphasizes the glory of freewill that was given to the human being by God in that it is in the image of the Godhead, *adespoton* in its beatitude (*De mortuis oratio* GNO 9.54.1–5). This idea also buttresses Gregory's rejection of slavery.[51] Being *adespoton*, which Gregory glosses with αὐτοκρατὲς καὶ ἄναρχον, is a mark of sovereignty, which belongs to God and God's image:[52] what is *adespoton* in us is by participation in divine *adespoton*.[53] Here Plato's category of participation (μέθεξις, μετουσία) is at work, which was amply deployed by Origen[54] and which Gregory also applies to human participation in God as Archetype/Prototype and ἰδέα of Beauty (*De virginitate* 11.1.5), and all beings' participation in God, the real Being (*De vita Moysis* 2.25). Αὐτεξούσιος and ἀδέσποτος are paired by Gregory in the description of the human soul's freewill, which can choose with sovereignty whatever it prefers (*Refutatio confessionis Eunomii* 139.6).

Notably, in *H.Cant.* GNO 6.160.17–161.1 Gregory embeds again Plato's quotation that is the gist of his argument for all humans' eschatological full recovery of freedom in the dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*: "virtue has no master [is something *adespoton*], is something voluntary [ἑκούσιον] and free from every constraint". God wants people to adhere to virtue voluntarily, not by force or out of fear, because humans are endowed with reason and freewill. Gregory here elaborates on Plato in the same terms as Origen. Once more, *De oratione* 256.19 features Plato's definition of virtue as *adespoton*, which excludes fear and implies moral responsibility: "virtue is free from fear and has no master; it chooses the good voluntarily and consciously". The same Platonic reminiscence, in service of the same argument, occurs again in *Hom. op.* 184.28–31.

Indeed, Gregory's doctrine of restoration, like Origen's, relies on Platonic tenets, e.g., the ideal of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, which for patristic Platonists constituted one of the best examples of the convergence between Plato (*Tht.* 176b) and Scripture (Gen 1:26); the notion that the end is similar to the beginning and entails unity as perfection;[55] that evil is not ontologically subsistent but is lack of Good, moral evil deriving from a wrong choice.

51 On which see Ramelli (2016c).

52 *CE* 1.1.554.3–10; *De beatitudinibus* PG 44.1300.39; *De hominis opificio* 136.25–27.

53 *CE* 2.1.224.10–15.

54 Ramelli (2017c).

55 Ramelli (2013b).

Gregory defines the soul, meaning the intellectual soul, οὐσία γενητή, ζῶσα, νοερά.[56] Γενητός in Plato *Tim.* 28bc, well known to Gregory, indicates the cosmos, created by the Demiurge; Gregory's definition has also parallels in Middle and Neoplatonism.[57] Gregory adds that the soul "infuses by itself into an instrumental body endowed with sense-perception the faculty of life and apprehension of sense-perceptible objects, as long as the nature that can receive these faculties subsists," i.e. while the mortal body is alive. After its death, the soul continues to exist as a created, living, and intellectual substance, but it ceases to infuse into the body the faculties of life and sense-perception. The description of the body as instrument of the soul, which returns in *Hom. Op.* 8, 12, and 15, echoes Plato, *Alcibiades I* 129b–130c. Nyssen's whole definition of soul holds if the soul is regarded as created not temporally, and not at the same time as the mortal body. This solves a contradiction that arises if the body together with which the soul is said by Gregory to be originated is understood as the mortal body: the contradiction raised by the perishability axiom, known to all Platonists, including Christian Platonists, and deemed rooted in Plato (Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi* 17 refers to Plato *Rep.* 546a and *Phdr.* 245d). Probably for Gregory, as for Origen, the human being was *nous* and immortal body before the fall; afterwards, the body became mortal.

Again reminiscent of Plato (*Phd.* 65cd, 67a, 79d, 80e, 83b), in *H.Cant.* 10, as already in *De anima*, Nyssen insists that the intellect can turn to upper realities and its activity can be pure only when detached from the mortal body and sense-perception. When the intellectual soul "rejoices in the contemplation of what really exists," it can "receive the vision of God with pure and bare mind" (a concept later developed by Evagrius). "The soul can adhere to the intellectual and immaterial only when it gets rid of the *weight of matter* that surrounds it … when, thanks to death, we attain incorporeality, we get close to that nature which is free from every physical *heaviness*".[58] In *H.Cant.* 15, Gregory still declares that the soul "must purify itself from everything and every material thought, transporting itself in its wholeness to the intellectual and immaterial realm, and become a most luminous image of the archetypal Beauty."

Plato's concept of the body as the soul's tomb is also used by Gregory (*Vita s. Macrinae* 54), who, too, deems philosophy a preparation for death. Again in *H.Cant.* 15, Gregory, like Origen, reworks Plato's myth of the fall of the soul's

56 *De anima et resurrectione* GNO 3/3.15.6–9; variant γεννητή.

57 Alcinous, *Did.* 117 H. = 49 Whittaker; Plotinus, *Enn.* IV 7, where the soul is described as generated and of intellectual nature; the authentic human being coincides with the (rational) soul; Iamblichus, *de An.* ap. Stobeus, *Anth.* 1.362 Wachsmuth.

58 *De mortuis oratio* 50–52 Lozza.

wings in light of Scripture. The human being was made in God's image; "therefore, the one who was created according to the image also had the likeness to the Archetype in every respect," in the first creation of the human being:

> but, according to Scripture, the Archetype of human nature has wings: consequently, our nature, too, was created winged, so as to have its likeness to God also in its wings … "Wings" means power, beatitude, incorruptibility, and the like. Thus, the human, too, possessed these qualities, as long as it was completely similar to God, while *subsequently the inclination toward evil deprived us of those wings*. When we left the protection of God's wings, we were *despoiled of our own wings*. For this reason, God's grace was revealed and enlightened us, that we could reject impiety and worldly desires, and could *put on our wings again* by virtue of holiness and justice.

V Some Case Studies from Evagrius

Evagrius Ponticus († 399) is one of the major patristic Neoplatonists, after Origen and Nyssen. Throughout his *Kephalaia Gnostika* and often elsewhere,[59] he supported Plato's tripartition of the soul into:

1) intellectual/rational faculty or part (νοῦς, λογικόν), the noblest, original, and most excellent, which defines rational creatures by itself;
2) irascible faculty (θυμός, θυμικόν), and
3) concupiscent/appetitive faculty (ἐπιθυμία, ἐπιθυμητικόν).

E.g. in *Praktikos* 89 Evagrius expounds the soul's tripartition according to Plato, with the relevant virtues proper to each part of the soul, crowned by justice, a virtue of the whole soul – i.e. Plato's theory of the four cardinal virtues. Evagrius appropriates Plato's definition of justice, "Justice effects a certain symphony and harmony among the different parts of the soul." But he attributes it to his own "wise teacher" (89.4), who is usually assumed to be Nazianzen, but can be Nyssen, who used this doctrine extensively. Nyssen's *De anima* was circulated in Egypt, and soon translated into Coptic, probably thanks to Evagrius' influence there. This dialogue defended the doctrine of apokatastasis, which Evagrius too upheld.[60]

59 E.g. *Praktikos* 38 and 78 and KG 5.27, 4.73, 3.35, 1.84, and 3.30.

60 Ramelli (2015a) and (forthcoming b).

If the "wise teacher" of justice is Nyssen, "Gregory the Just" mentioned in the epilogue of Evagrius' *Praktikos* may also be Nyssen. This is probably the same person cited in *Gnostikos* 44, where Evagrius adopts an agricultural metaphor likely inspired by Nyssen, and features again Plato's cardinal virtues: "There are four virtues necessary for contemplation, according to Gregory the Just's teaching: prudence, courage, temperance, and justice … The reception of the first sower's seed and the rejection of what is sown secondarily is the proper work of continence, according to Gregory." Given the extensive allegory of God as first planter in Nyssen's *De anima*, and given his description of passions and vices as *epigennēmata* to be rejected in a life of asceticism, Gregory the Just, generally identified with Nazianzen, may be Nyssen.

Evagrius in his ascetic system takes over Plato's μελέτη θανάτου and flight from the body: "to separate the soul from the body belongs to anyone who desires virtue. The life of withdrawal has been called by the fathers a preparation for death and flight from the body" (*Praktikos* 52). Although Evagrius refers to "the fathers", Plato's *Phaedo* is the main reference here, and among Christian thinkers Nyssen had offered a Christian remake of it.

Evagrius assumes not only Plato's threefold division of the soul, but also Nyssen's idea that the two inferior components are adventitious, contingent upon the fall, and against nature; they did not exist at the beginning and will not endure in the end. Since all the faculties humans have in common with animals belong to the corporeal nature, then the irascible and concupiscent faculties were not created together with the rational nature before the movement of will that determined the fall (KG 6.85). They are adventitious; they do not belong to the authentic human nature, which is the prelapsarian nature of rational creatures. Evagrius declares these faculties to be "against nature" (KG 6.83), being connected with tempting thoughts, *logismoi.* The latter's transformation into passions, however, depends on the assent of the rational soul, as Origen also taught.

Like Plato, Evagrius proclaims the intellect's excellence among the soul's faculties: "The intellect is the most valuable of all the faculties of the soul" (KG 6.51). In KG 3.6 and 3.55, the reason for the intellect's superiority is individuated in its relation to God: "The bare intellect is that which, by means of the contemplation regarding it, is joined to the knowledge of the Trinity. In the beginning the intellect had God, who is incorruptible, as teacher of immaterial intellections. Now, however, it has received corruptible sense-perception as teacher of material intellections."

Evagrius also supported the body-soul-intellect tripartition – widespread in imperial and late antique philosophy – which he applied both to humans and (metaphorically and mystically) to God in *Epistula ad Melaniam* 15: God's

body are rational creatures, created intellects; God's soul are the Son and the Spirit; God's intellect is the Father.

Evagrius' purification-knowledge scheme bears a close relation to Neoplatonism, and has distinctive roots in Plato himself. Evagrius ubiquitously assumes an ideal sequence and synergy of *praktikē* and *theōria.* Πρακτική, πρακτικός, and related terms are also attested in "pagan" Neoplatonism in the same sense of "ethics".[61] Evagrius defines *praktikē* as "the spiritual method for purifying the part of the soul subject to passions" (*Praktikos* 78). Its aim is *apatheia*, absence of passions or bad emotions. *Praktikē* is the first component of the Christian doctrine, inseparable from the highest component, theology: "Christianity is the doctrine of Jesus Christ our Savior, consisting in ethics/asceticism [πρακτική], philosophy of nature [φυσική], and theology [θεολογική]" (*Praktikos* 1). The intellect, now distinct from the soul and especially from the part of the soul subject to passions, ought to proceed along its own contemplative path toward the angels; if it proceeds on the path of the soul subject to passions (renouncing πρακτική), while this soul should rather be the instrument of the intellect – just as the body is of the soul – it risks ending up among demons (KG 2.48). There can be no knowledge without the purification of πρακτική, no knowledge without virtue, and vice versa.

Indeed, Plato ultimately inspired Evagrius with the tenet of the inseparability of virtue and knowledge – a corollary of Plato's ethical intellectualism embraced by Evagrius, as by Origen, Nyssen, and other Christian Platonists. In Evagrius' view, the perfection of the intellect, consisting in knowledge, requires the perfection of the inferior parts of the soul, subject to passions; this sequence was Neoplatonic.[62] It is impossible to acquire knowledge without having renounced mundane things, evil, and ignorance (Περὶ λογισμῶν 26). Clement already posited a similar passage from the cathartic to the "epoptic" mode, from purification to contemplation (*Strom.* 5.70.7–71.2). In Evagrius, purification-πρακτική and contemplation-γνῶσις-θεωρία are not just two subsequent steps, but are deeply interrelated: no knowledge without virtue, and conversely no virtue without knowledge, on the grounds of Plato's ethical intellectualism.

Evagrius' tenet of the eventual subsumption of body into soul and soul into intellect – opposite to the descent of intellect to soul and soul to body – as a return to unity must be read against the backdrop of Christian Neoplatonism. This theory of Evagrius was traced back by Eriugena – the greatest Christian Platonist in the West between Origen and Eckhart – to Nyssen, Evagrius' teacher,

61 Olympiodorus, *Prolegomena et in Categorias commentarium* 8.

62 This has been rightly shown by Stefaniw (2010).

and proved influential upon Maximus the Confessor and Eriugena himself, who made the most of it: *Gregorius similiter et incunctanter astruit mutationem corporis tempore resurrectionis in animam, animae in intellectum, intellectus in Deum* (*Per*. 5.987C). For Evagrius, the first bodies to disappear will be mortal bodies, which were the last to appear (after the fall) and will vanish at the resurrection, when they are turned into immortal. Then all bodies will cease to exist as secondary beings, when bodies will be elevated to the rank of souls and souls to that of intellects, thus becoming primary. In the end, only primary beings (intellects) will remain, those which were created at the beginning.

Once the body has been raised to the rank of soul, the intellect in its power will pervade the soul, when the whole of it will be mingled with God's light (KG 2.29). This will happen at the eventual restoration and deification. When the intellects receive contemplation, then the bodies' whole nature will be eliminated, not because they will be destroyed, but because they will be transformed into souls and thereby into intellects: thus, the contemplation (θεωρία) concerning them will not disappear, but "become immaterial," since bodies will be immaterial (KG 2.62). Plurality, numbers, and names will disappear along with the ages (KG 1.7–8) and bodies, which were useful for life in the ages. Quantity, plurality, and number are attached to secondary beings, diastematic realities. Quantity pertains to the mortal corporeal nature; thus number relates to secondary natural contemplation (KG 4.19). This contemplation pertains to secondary beings, which will be subsumed into the first. So also their contemplation, far from disappearing, will become primary, and the perfection of the intellect will consist in immaterial knowledge. Now immaterial knowledge is God; therefore, the intellect will become a seer of God (KG 3.15). The contemplation of God produces in turn the deification of creatural intellects.

What is inferior will be subsumed into what is superior, bodies into souls and souls into intellects. Indeed, Evagrius hints at the fluidity of body and soul also when he states that in the Gospel Jesus, saying that the eye is the lamp of the body, calls "body" what is in fact the inferior part of the soul, non-rational and liable to passions (ἄλογον, παθητικὸν μέρος), what in Plato's terminology, which Evagrius follows again, is called the irascible and concupiscent parts (τὸ θυμικὸν καὶ ἐπιθυμητικὸν μέρος τῆς ψυχῆς). The lamp itself is the intellect, which is receptive of knowledge (*Expositio in Proverbia Salomonis* p. 92.4).

Christian Platonism, from Clement and especially Origen, through the Cappadocians and Evagrius, down to Eriugena, is part and parcel of the Platonic tradition. Plato in their thought is scarcely less central than he is in "pagan" Platonism. Their primary authoritative text was Scripture, but Plato's teachings were for them the same as Scripture's – Plato was inspired by the same Logos that inspired Scripture, and, like Philo already, they read Scripture through a Platonic lens.

CHAPTER 15

Sethian Gnostic Appropriations of Plato

John D. Turner

I Introduction

Rather than being intellectually passive and philosophically unsophisticated "proletarian Platonists" who merely appropriated Plato's philosophy from hearsay or popular digests of his thought by genuine academic Platonists, the Sethian Gnostics, especially the authors of the four "Platonizing" Sethian treatises from Nag Hammadi – *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, the *Three Steles of Seth*, and *Marsanes* – turn out to be rather close readers of Plato's dialogues relevant to the metaphysics of their often complex and innovative theories of ontology, ontogenesis, and epistemology, such as the *Timaeus*, *Symposium*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Phaedo*, and *Phaedrus*. This essay illustrates this thesis by examining these Sethian Platonizing doctrines of transcendental ontology and ontogenesis, contemplative ascent into union with the supreme principle, intelligible reality, the modes of being and non-being, dialectic, the ascent and descent of the soul, and demiurgy.

Of the eleven Sethian Gnostic treatises contained in the thirteen Coptic codices discovered at Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945, there are four – *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, *Marsanes*, and the *Three Steles of Seth* – that form a distinctive group that can be called "the Platonizing Sethian treatises." The first three of these texts commemorate the ecstatic ascent of a single exceptional individual such as Zostrianos (the alleged uncle or grandfather of Zoroaster), Allogenes (perhaps a cognomen of Seth "one of another kind, race," a play on *sperma heteron* of Gen 4:25), and Marsanes (who may have been a contemporary Sethian prophet).[1] The various stages of these ascents are articulated according to ever-ascending levels of transcendent being whose ontology is typical of contemporary Middle Platonic metaphysical treatises, blended with certain features from the metaphysics of Stoicism, Neopythagoreanism, the Old Academy and Plato himself. But what is unique to these Platonizing treatises is their portrayal of the unfolding of the world of true being and intellect from its source in a transcendent, only negatively-conceivable ultimate unitary principle which is itself beyond being. Beginning with an initial identity as a sort of potential or

1 On these sources, see Turner (1990), (2000a), (2000b), (2001), (2004).

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prefigurative existence of a given product with its source, there then occurs an indefinite procession or spontaneous emission of the product from its source, whereupon the product undergoes a contemplative visionary reversion upon its own prefiguration within its source whereby it becomes aware of its separate existence and thereby takes on its own distinctive form and definition.[2] The later Neoplatonists named these three stages Permanence or Remaining, Procession, and Reversion, and – like the Sethian Platonizing treatises – often characterized the three successive modes of the product's existence during this process by the terms of the noetic triad of Existence or Being, Life, and Intellect.

Although Plotinus has often been credited with being the first major philosopher to elaborate such a scheme explicitly, it is clear that a similar model of dynamic emanation occurs in Gnostic thought, some of which precede Plotinus chronologically.[3]

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2 A classic example is offered by Plotinus in *Enn.* V 2 [11], 1.8–13: "It is because there is nothing in it that all things come from it: in order that Being may exist, the One is not being, but the generator of being. This, we may say, is the first act of generation: the One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows, as it were, and its superabundance makes something other than itself. This, when it has come into being, turns back upon the One and is filled, and becomes Intellect by looking towards it. Its halt and turning towards the One constitutes Being, its gaze upon the One, Intellect. Since it halts and turns towards the One that it may see, it becomes at once Intellect and Being." All translations of Plotinus are from Armstrong (1966–88).

3 Thus at the beginning of the *Tripartite Tractate* NHC I 56.16–57.3, the ineffable Father has a thought of himself, which is the Son. Likewise in Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 7 [Casey], the Unknown Father is said to emit the second principle, the Monogenes-Son, "as if knowing himself" (ὡς ἂν ἑαυτὸν ἐγνωκώς, … προέβαλε τὸν Μονογενῆ). In both *Eugnostos the Blessed* and its Christianized version, the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, the divine Forefather sees himself "within himself as in a mirror", and the resultant image is the second principle, the Self-Father. *Eugnostos* NHC III 74.21–75.12: "The Lord of the Universe is not rightly called 'Father' but 'Forefather.' For the Father is the beginning (*or* principle) of what is visible. For he (the Lord) is the beginningless Forefather. He sees himself within himself, like a mirror, having appeared in his likeness as Self-Father, that is, Self-Begetter, and as Confronter, since he is face to face with the Unbegotten First Existent. He is indeed of equal age with the one who is before him, but he is not equal to him in power." Also 72.10–11: "It looks to every side and sees itself from itself." Cf. The *Sophia of Jesus Christ* NHC III 98.24–99.13 & 95.6. In Ps-Hippolytus' account (*Refutatio omnium haeresium* VI.13 [Markovich]) of Simonian doctrine, the pre-existent first principle abides in absolute unity, but gives rise to an intellectual principle through self-manifestation: "manifesting himself to himself, the one who stood became the second." According to the initial theogony of *the Apocryphon of John*, the supreme Invisible Spirit emanates an overflow of luminous water in which he then sees a reflection of himself; this self-vision then becomes the second, intellectual, principle, Barbelo, the divine First Thought. *Ap. Jn.* BG 8502 26.1–30.4:

Within this corpus of "Platonizing Sethian" treatises, *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes* occupy a special place, since Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* 16 tells us that they were studied and critiqued at length by Plotinus and other members of his philosophical seminar in Rome during the years 265–268CE.[4] As Zeke Mazur has recently noted,[5] these treatises reveal a number of textual allusions to passages of the Platonic dialogues themselves, suggesting that their authors were engaged in the close reading and highly selective interpretation of the dialogues in much the same way that other Sethians had approached Jewish and Christian scripture. These Platonizing Sethians were adept at finding and exploiting subtle verbal and conceptual parallels between their own ideas and their Platonic sources from which they adopted passages, often apart from their original context, in the service of an *interpretatio Gnostica* that often differed considerably from what Plato's original intention, and was in fact attributed, not to Plato, but to revelations from various quite non-Hellenic angelic beings and ancient pre-Platonic worthies like Zostrianos and the biblical Seth.

II The Metaphysics of the Sethian Platonizing Treatises

The metaphysical hierarchy of the Platonizing Sethian treatises is headed by a supreme and pre-existent Unknowable One, often called the Invisible Spirit.[6]

"For it is he (the Invisible Spirit or Monad) who contemplates himself in his own light that surrounds him, which is he himself, the source of living water … The fountain of the Spirit flowed from the living luminous water and provided all aeons and worlds. In every direction he contemplated his own image (εἰκών), beholding it in the pure luminous water that surrounds him. And his Thought (ἔννοια) became active and appeared and stood at rest before him in the brilliance of the light. She [is the Providence (πρόνοια) of the All] the likeness of the light, the image of the invisible One, the perfect power Barbelo."

4 Indeed, Plotinus' antignostic critique in *Ennead* II 9 [33], 10 seems actually to cite *Zostrianos* (*Zost.* NHC VIII 10.1–20), which raises the question of the extent to which the doctrines he read in these Sethian texts may have made positive contributions to his own metaphysical philosophy.

5 Mazur (2013), 2–3; cf. also Turner (2012).

6 From certain earlier Sethian treatises (*Apocryphon of John*, the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*), the Platonizing treatises have inherited a tendency to identify the supreme deity by the somewhat Stoicizing name "the Invisible Spirit." While the *Three Steles of Seth* (NHC VII 125.23–25) calls this supreme pre-existent One a "single living Spirit," *Zostrianos* identifies this One as "the Triple Powered Invisible Spirit." On the other hand, *Allogenes* tends to distinguish this One from both the Invisible Spirit and the Triple Powered One, while *Marsanes* supplements them all with a supreme "unknown silent One."

As in Plotinus, this One is clearly beyond being, and can be described only in negative terms mostly derived from the second half of Plato's *Parmenides*, especially its first hypothesis (137c–142a).

Below the supreme One, at the level of determinate being, is the Barbelo Aeon, conceived along the lines of a Middle Platonic tripartite divine Intellect.[7] At the highest level, Kalyptos ("hidden") is the contemplated intellect (*nous noētos*) in which are the paradigmatic ideas or authentic existents, each of which is a unique, uncombinable paradigmatic form.[8] At the median level, Protophanes is the contemplating intellect (*nous noeros* or *theorētikos*) in which these paradigms now "first appear" altogether unified[9] with the minds

7 Cf. Codex Bruce, *Untitled* 242.24–253.2 [Schmidt-MacDermot]: "Moreover the power that was given to the forefather is called first-visible because it is he who was first manifest (πρωτ οφανής. And he was called unbegotten because no one had created him. And he was (called) the ineffable and the nameless one. And he was also called self-begotten (αὐτογενής) and self-willed because he had revealed himself by his own will." Cf. Phanes, *Orphicorum Hymni* 52.5–6; *Papyri Magicae* IV.943–4; cf. Orphic *Argonautica*, line 16 Dottin: Φάνητα … καλέουσι Βτοτοί· πρῶτος γὰρ ἐφάνθη.

8 See *Allogenes* NHC XI 46.6–35. In *Zostrianos* NHC VIII 82.8–13, Kalyptos emerges as the second knowledge of the Invisible Spirit (the first being Barbelo), "the knowledge of his knowledge;" in 119.12–13 Kalyptos is associated with "his ἰδέα." All translations of the Sethian Platonizing treatises are my own.

9 Cf. "those who are unified" in *Allogenes* NHC XI 45.7–8; 46.21; 48.6–8; 55.14–15; *Zostrianos* NHC VIII 21.10–11: "undivided, with living thoughts" and 116.1–6: "All of them exist in unity, unified and individually, perfected in fellowship and filled with the aeon that truly exists." Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* IV 1 [42], 1.5–6: "There the whole of Intellect is all together and not separated or divided, and all souls are together" (ἐκει δὲ (i.e., ἐν τῷ νῷ) ὁμοῦ μὲν νοῦς πᾶς καὶ οὐ διακεκριμένον οὐδὲ μεμερισμένον, ὁμοῦ δὲ πάσαι ψυχαί); V.8[31] 10.16–22: "And that (beauty) above everything that courses round about its (the intelligible world) entire magnitude is finally seen by those who have already seen many clear visions, the gods individually and together (οἱ θεοὶ καθ᾽ ἕνα καὶ πᾶς ὁμοῦ), and the souls who see everything there and originate from everything, so as to contain everything themselves from beginning to end; and they are present there (in the intelligible realm) so long as they are naturally able, but oftentimes – when they are undivided – even the whole of them is present." Cf. *Corpus Hermeticum* (frg. 21 Nock-Festugière): "The preexistent one is thus above those that exist and those that truly exist, for there is a preexistent one through which the so-called universal essentiality of those that truly exist is intelligized together, while those that exist are intelligized individually. Their opposites, on the other hand, again existing individually, is nature, a sensible substance that contains all sensibles" (Ἔστι τοίνυν τὸ προὸν ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν ὄντων καὶ τῶν ὄντως ὄντων· προὸν [ὂν] γάρ ἐστι, δι᾽οὗ ἡ οὐσιότης ἡ καθόλου λεγομένη κοινὴ νοεῖται τῶν ὄντως ὄντων καὶ τῶν ὄντων τῶν καθ᾽ ἑαυτὰ νοουμένων. τὰ δὲ ἐναντία τούτοις κατὰ τὸ ἕτερον πάλιν αὐτὰ καθ᾽ἑαυτά ἐστι φύσις, οὐσία αἰσθητή, ἔχουσα ἐν ἑαυτῇ αἰσθητὰ πάντα).

that contemplate them.[10] At the lowest level, Autogenes ("self-generated") would be a demiurgic mind (*nous praktikos* or *dianooumenos*) who shapes the individuated realm of Nature below him according to the forms in Kalyptos that are contemplated and made available to him by Protophanes.[11] As the equivalent of the Plotinian Soul, Autogenes analyzes these forms in a discursive fashion, and thus comes to contain the "perfect individuals", the ideas of particular, individual things, as well as individual souls.[12] In fact, the names Kalyptos, Protophanes, and Autogenes would suggest that they could designate, not just the ontological levels of the Barbelo Aeon, but rather the dynamic process by which the Barbelo Aeon gradually unfolds from its source in the Invisible Spirit: at first "hidden" (*kalyptos*) or latent within the Spirit as its prefigurative intellect, then "first appearing" (*prōtofanēs*) as the first moment of the Spirit's separately-existing thought or intelligence, and finally "self-generated" (*autogenēs*) as a fully-formed demiurgical mind.[13]

Nevertheless, when it came to working out the actual dynamics of the emanation of the Barbelo Aeon, the Platonizing Sethian treatises employ a completely different and distinctive terminology to account for the emergence of

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10 Apparently to be distinguished both from ideas of particular things (in Autogenes) and from the uncombinable authentic existents in Kalyptos, rather like the "mathematicals" attributed to Plato by Aristotle, *Metaph.* A 987b14–18; N 1080a11–b14.

11 These functional distinctions within the divine intellect were justified by a reading of the *Timaeus*' (39e) doctrine of a transcendent model contemplated by a demiurge who then orders the universe in accord with the model: "Whatsoever forms intellect (νοῦς) beholds (καθορᾷ) the ideas resident in the truly living being (ὅ ἐστι ζῷον) in their kinds and numbers, such and so many as exist therein he planned (διενοήθη) that the universe should contain," reflected in Numenius (Frgs. 11, 13, 15, 16 des Places), Amelius (Proclus, *In Tim.* I 306.1–14; I 309.14–20; I 431.26–28), and the early Plotinus (*Ennead* III 9 [13], 1, but rejected in *Ennead* II 9 [33], 1).

12 Originally Aristotle's distinction (cf. Psellus, [*De anima et mente*] 68.21–22 O'Meara: ἔτι ὁ νοῦς ὁ πρακτικὸς περὶ τὰ μερικά, ὁ θεωρητικὸς περὶ τὰ καθόλου); in Plotinus, *Enn.* III 9 [13], 1.26–37 this third hypostasis is called Soul and the products of its discursive thought are many individual souls. For Plotinus, the equivalent of Autogenes is Soul: its highest level dwells in Intellect (the equivalent of Protophanes) and contains all souls and intellects; it is one and unbounded (i.e., having all things together, every life and soul and intellect), holding all things together (πάντα ὁμοῦ), each distinct and yet not distinct in separation (*Enn.* VI.4[22] 14.4–5: ἕκαστον διακεκριμένον καὶ αὖ οὐ διακριθὲν χωρίς,). On individuals in Plotinus, see Blumenthal (1966).

13 In *Ad Candidum* 14.11–14 [Henri-Hadot], Marius Victorinus hints at a similar progression: "For what is above ὄν is hidden (cf. Kalyptos) ὄν; indeed the manifestation (cf. Protophanes) of the hidden is generation (cf. Autogenes), since ὄν in potentiality generates ὄν in act."

the Barbelo Aeon from the supreme Invisible Spirit, namely the noetic triad of Being, Life, and Mind.[14] Indeed, Plotinus himself occasionally uses this triad to illustrate how the One gives rise to something other than itself, as in the generation of intellect from a trace of life emitting from the One.[15] But just as the Sethians confined the Kalyptos-Protophanes-Autogenes triad to their second hypostasis Barbelo, Plotinus too mostly confined the function of the noetic triad to his second hypostasis, Intellect, where Mind (*nous*) denotes the thinking subject, Being (*to on*) denotes the object of its thinking, and Life (*zōē*) denotes the activity of thinking itself.[16]

In the Platonizing Sethian treatises, the noetic triad appears as the supreme Invisible Spirit's Triple Power, whose three powers serve as the emanative means by which the supreme Unknowable One generates the Aeon of Barbelo

14 On the Platonic sources of the triad itself, see the seminal article of Hadot (1960a). The case for a pre–Plotinian origin of the triad is made in Corrigan (2000), while the case for a Sethian origin was made most recently by Rasimus (2013).

15 E.g., *Enn.* VI 7 [38], 17.13–26: "Life, not the life of the One, but a trace of it, looking toward the One was boundless, but once having looked was bounded (without bounding its source). Life looks toward the One and, determined by it, takes on boundary, limit and form … it must then have been determined as (the life of) a Unity including multiplicity. Each element of multiplicity is determined multiplicity because of Life, but is also a Unity because of limit … so Intellect is bounded Life." In *Enn.* II 9 [33], 3.10–11, Plotinus' insistence that each successive ontological level from the One through Intellect and Soul on down to the sensible realm is necessarily vivified by its superiors, seems to be invoking the Platonizing Sethian treatises' own notion that the boundless vitality overflowing from the supreme principle results in the generation of the Barbelo Aeon as a divine intellect. As in *Allogenes* NHC XI 48.29–49.1: "Yet he is a provider of provisions and a divinity of divinity—but whenever they apprehend they participate the First Vitality (Coptic *tšorp m̅m̅ntōnh* < *πρώτη ζῳότης) and an undivided *energeia* and a hypostasis of the First One from the One who truly exists. And a second *energeia*…". Plotinus here refers to both a primary and secondary life or vitality as virtual synonyms for his well-known doctrine of two activities (*energeiai*), an "internal" primary activity by which an entity is what it is, and an incidental "external" or secondary activity that it emits as an image or trace of its primary internal activity, e.g., *Enn.* IV 8 [6], 6.1–2; V 4 [7], 2.21–37; V 1 [10], 6.28–53; IV 5 [29], 7.13–23; II 9 [33], 8.11–19; VI 2 [43], 22.26–29; V 3 [49], 7.13–3 and VI 8 [39], 16; V 9 [5], 8.

16 Justified by Plato, *Sph.* 248e–249b: "Are we really to be so easily persuaded that change, life, soul and intelligence have no place in the perfectly real (παντελῶς ὄν), that is has neither life (ζωή) nor intelligence (νοῦς), but stands aloof devoid of intelligence (φρόνησις)?" and *Tim.* 39e, cited above, n.11. Intellect is not a lifeless being, but an act (*Enn.* V 3 [49], 5.33–44; cf. VI 9 [9], 9.17; II 4 [25], 3.36; V 5 [32], 2.9–13; II 9 [33], 6.14–19). This restriction perhaps owes to his aversion to Middle Platonic and even Gnostic theologies that multiply the number of transcendental hypostases beyond three.

in three phases. 1) In its initial phase the Triple Power is a purely infinitival Existence (*ḥyparxis* or *ontotēs*) latent within and identical with the supreme One; 2) in its emanative phase it is an indeterminate Vitality (*zōotēs*) or Blessedness that proceeds forth from One; and 3) in its final phase it is a Mentality (*nootēs*) that contemplates its prefiguration in the supreme One, an act by which it delimits itself as the fully determinate being of a new and distinct intellectual entity, the Aeon of Barbelo.[17]

Moreover, in *Allogenes*, these descending ontogenetic phases in reverse order also demarcate the phases through which its central character Allogenes contemplatively ascends to reunite with his own primordial prefiguration in the Unknowable One. That is, his mystical ascent retraces the ontogenetic sequence of the phases by which the Invisible Spirit's Triple Power unfolds into the Aeon of Barbelo. It consists of successive contemplative self-withdrawals into his primordial self or "originary manifestation" still resident in the supreme One, and ends in an utter cognitive vacancy where knower and known become completely assimilated to one another, as narrated on pages 60–61 of *Allogenes*:[18]

17 E.g., *Zostrianos* NHC VIII 81.6–20: "She (Barbelo) [was] existing [individually] [as cause] of [the declination]. Lest she come forth anymore or get further away from perfection, she knew herself and him (the Invisible Spirit), and she stood at rest and spread forth on his [behalf] … to know herself and the one that pre-exists." *Allogenes* NHC XI 45.22–30 seems to combine this notion of self-reflexive thinking with elements of the Stoic theory of tonic motion: "For after it (the Barbelo Aeon) [contracted, it expanded] and [spread out] and became complete, [and] it was empowered [with] all of them, by knowing [itself in the perfect Invisible Spirit]. And it [became an] aeon who knows [herself because] she knew that one"; XI 48.15–17: "it is with [the] hiddenness of Existence that he provides Being, [providing] for [it in] every way, since it is this that [shall] come into being when he intelligizes himself" and XI 49.5–26: "He is endowed with [Blessedness] and Goodness, because when he is intelligized as the Delimiter (D of the Boundlessness (B) of the Invisible Spirit (IS) [that subsists] in him (D), it (B) causes [him (D)] to revert to [it (IS)] in order that it (B) might know what it is that is within it (IS) and how it (IS) exists, and that he (D) might guarantee the endurance of everything by being a cause for those who truly exist. For through him (D) knowledge of it (IS) became available, since he (D) is the one who knows what it (IS; or he, D?) is. But they brought forth nothing [beyond] themselves, neither power nor rank nor glory nor aeon, for they are all eternal."

18 Significantly, in *Enn.* III 8 [30], 9.29–39, Plotinus too describes the contemplative ascent to the One as a withdrawal into one's prenoetic, primordial self, which, rather than "primary revelation" or "originary manifestation" (Coptic *oumnt̓šorp nouōnḥ ebol*, perhaps for Gk. *prophania*' on which see Mazur (2005) he denominates as the "first life": "What is it, then, which we shall receive when we set our intellect to it? Rather, the intellect must first withdraw, so to speak, backwards, and give itself up, in a way, to what lies behind it – for it faces in both directions; and there, if it wishes to see that First Principle, it must not be altogether intellect.

> *Allogenes* NHC XI 60.14–61.22
> There was within me a stillness of silence, and I heard the Blessedness whereby I knew <my> proper self. And I withdrew to the Vitality as I sought <myself>. And I joined it and stood, not firmly but quietly. And I saw an eternal, intellectual, undivided motion, all-powerful, formless, undetermined by determination. And when I wanted to stand firmly, I withdrew to the Existence, which I found standing and at rest. Like an image and likeness of what had come upon me by means of a manifestation of the Indivisible and the Stable, I was filled with revelation; by means of an originary manifestation of the Unknowable One, [as though] unknowing him, I [knew] him and was empowered by him. Having been permanently strengthened, I knew that [which] exists in me, even the Triple-Powered One and the manifestation of his uncontainableness. [And] by means of a originary manifestation of the universally prime Unknowable One – the God beyond perfection – I saw him and the Triple-Powered One that exists in them all. I was seeking the ineffable and unknowable God of whom – should one know him – one would be completely unknowing, the mediator of the Triple-Powered One, the one who subsists in stillness and silence and is unknowable.

After having unknowingly "known" the unknowable First One and its Triple Power at the point of its – and his own – originary manifestation, Allogenes – who apparently continues to seek the unknowable God – is then instructed by the Luminaries to "hear" about him by means of an "originary manifestation" or protophany supplemented by a "revelation":

For *it is the first life*, since it is an activity manifest in the way of outgoing of all things; outgoing not in the sense that it is now in process of going out but that it has gone out. If, then, it is life and outgoing and holds all things distinctly and not in a vague general way – for [in the latter case] it would hold them imperfectly and inarticulately – it must itself derive from something else, which is no more in the way of outgoing, but is the origin of outgoing, and the origin of life and the origin of intellect and all things." Elsewhere Plotinus frequently imputes a kind of transcendent "life" to the activity intrinsic to the One: cf. *Enn.* VI 8 [39], 7.51 and V 3 [49], 16.40. On self-vision, cf. *Enn.* V 8 [31], 11.1–8: "Further, one of us, being unable to see himself, when he is possessed by that god brings his contemplation to the point of vision, and presents himself to his own mind and looks at a beautified image of himself; but then he dismisses that image, beautiful though it is, and comes to unity with himself, and, making no more separation, is one and all together with that god silently present, and is with him as much as he wants to be and can be."

> *Allogenes* NHC XI 61.22–31
> And when I was confirmed in these matters, the powers of the Luminaries said to me: "Cease dissipating the inactivity that exists in you by (further) inquiry after incomprehensible matters; rather hear about him insofar as it is possible by means of an originary manifestation together with a revelation."

The ensuing auditory "revelation" turns out to be a dominantly negative theology (XI 61.32–62.13) supplemented by a more affirmative theology (XI 62.14–67.20).

III *Allogenes*: A Major Sethian Gnostic Appropriation of Plato

In Platonizing conceptual environments such as that reflected in *Allogenes*, contemplative ascents to the supreme principle could hardly avoid being consciously influenced by Plato's own description of the ascent to the sudden vision of absolute Beauty that Diotima reveals to Socrates in the *Symposium* (210e–211d).[19] Such an ascent is clearly the basis of the third (*via eminentiae*) of the three methods of knowing God summarized in the tenth chapter of Alcinous' *Didaskalikos*. Allogenes' visionary ascent combines this method together with a fourth method mentioned later in *Didaskalikos* 28, the *via imitationis* or way of assimilation.[20] But it is seldom noticed, not even by Alcinous, that the first of

19 According to the analysis of O'Brien (1964), 16–17, the method of ascent consists of a qualitative and quantitative purification or purgation of the soul by a redirection of Eros, the moving force of the soul, away from the lower realm to the higher. The qualitative purgation is a progressive shift of attention from the sensible to the intelligible realm in three levels of knowing, which correspond to three levels of experience: physical beauty, moral beauty and intellectual beauty; these are the objects respectively of the bodily senses, the ethical components of the soul, and the intelligizing, contemplative faculty of the reflective soul. The quantitative purgation is a shift of attention away from individual instances of beauty, to the ideal beauty of all forms, and finally to absolute beauty itself, which then discloses itself as a sudden and immediate intuition.

20 In Alcinoos, *Did.* 10.5–6 [165,16–34 Whittaker–Combès]: the *via negationis* (κατὰ ἀφαιρεσιν), the *via analogiae* (κατὰ ἀναλογίαν), the *via eminentiae* (διὰ τὴν ἐν τῷ τιμίῳ ὑπερόχην), and in *Did.* 28.1–7 [181,19–26], the *via imitationis* (ὁμοίωσιν θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν).

his four methods, the way by negation or abstraction – sometimes said to be based on the negations of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* – is actually implemented in the *Symposium* immediately following Diotima's description of the ascent to the vision of absolute Beauty.[21] Just as in the *Symposium*, where the ascent to a direct vision of absolute Beauty is followed by a negative "theology" of Beauty, so too Allogenes' ascent to a vision of the Unknowable One is immediately followed by a negative theology of the supreme One. In my opinion, is no coincidence that in both the *Symposium* and *Allogenes*, the culminating description of the means of the ultimate ascent – revealed respectively to Socrates by Diotima (201d –212c) and to Allogenes by the powers of the Luminaries of the Barbelo Aeon (NHC XI 59.4–68.top) – are each preceded by a sequence of five speeches: in *Allogenes*, the five revelations of Youel occupying its first half (NHC XI 45.6–50.17; 50.17–52.12; 52.13–55.17; 55.17–32; and 55.33–58.7) and in the *Symposium*, by the five prefatory speeches of Phaedrus (178a –180b), Pausanias (180c –185c), Eryximachus (185c –188e), Aristophanes (189a –193d), and Agathon (193d –197e) that lead up to that of Diotima. That is, the entire structure of the Sethian Platonizing treatise *Allogenes* was likely modeled on Plato's *Symposium*. The following table helps to illustrate this parallel structure:

21 *Symp.* 210e2–211b5; 211cd: "When a man has been thus far tutored in acts of yearning (τὰ ἐρωτικά), correctly beholding successively beautiful things, as he draws to the goal of his yearnings he will suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) discern a wondrous vision, beautiful in its nature; and this, Socrates, is the final object of all those previous toils. First of all, it is ever-existent [211a] and neither comes to be nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes; moreover, it is neither partly beautiful not partly ugly, nor is it something at one time and something else at another, nor beautiful in one respect and ugly in another, nor beautiful to some and ugly to others. Nor again does it appear to him as if it were a face or of hands or any other portion of the body, nor as some kind of reason or knowledge, nor as existing somewhere in something else, such as an animal or [211b] the earth or sky or any other thing; but existing always in singularity of form independent by itself, while all the multitude of beautiful things participate it in such a way that, even though they all come to be and pass away, it becomes neither greater nor less, and is affected by nothing. … [211c] Beginning from obvious beauties he must for the sake of that highest beauty be ever climbing aloft, as on the rungs of a ladder, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies; from personal beauty he proceeds to beautiful observances, from observance to beautiful learning, and from learning at last to that particular study which is concerned with the beautiful itself and that alone; so that in the end he comes to know [211d] the very essence of beauty."

TABLE 15.1 *Possible Structural Parallels between Allogenes and Plato's Symposium*

Symposium		*Allogenes*	
Speaker	***Stage of Ascent***	**Speaker**	***Stage of Ascent***
Phaedrus 178a –180b	From (physical) love of individual bodies to love of all beautiful bodies, ambition	Youel 45.6–50.17	Discriminating between particulars and universals
Pausanias 180c –185c	From beautiful bodies to beautiful souls and practices, nobility of character	Youel 50.17–52.12	Turning inward to the Good that resides within oneself
Eryximachus 185c –188e	From beautiful practices to beautiful learning, universal harmony of balance/imbalance	Youel 52.13–55.17	Glorification of transcendental realities (cf. Agathon's speech)
Aristophanes 189a –193d	From beautiful learning to yearning for the beauty of completion and reunification	Youel 55.17–32	Acknowledging the single source of transcendent realities and yearning for higher revelation
Agathon 193d –197e	Knowing the essence of Beauty within oneself; desire for the Good, fulfillment, tranquility	Youel 55.33–58.7	Ascent from knowledge of the Good within oneself to knowledge of the realm of true Being (Barbelo Aeon)
Interlude: 198a–201c	Socrates & Agathon	Interlude: 58,8–59,3	After 100 years Allogenes elevated to a "pure place" sees Barbelo Aeon
Diotima *apud* Socrates 201d –212c	Visionary ascent ending in a sudden self-manifestation of the beautiful itself + negative theology	Powers of Luminaries 59,4–68,top	Unknowing knowledge of the Unknowable One through originary self-manifestation + negative theology

IV Further Instances of Sethian Appropriations of Plato's Dialogues

As exegetes of Plato's dialogues, these Sethian authors – rather like Plotinus – concerned themselves, not so much with the main questions of a given dialogue, but rather with specific affirmations – often in the form of isolated assertions – that supported the exegete's own central metaphysical concerns, rarely paying attention to their original context.[22] Rather than following the letter of the Platonic text, each succeeded in producing and developing a new form of Platonic thinking, often in order to support the authority and efficacy of their more mythological revelations. In this sense, the Gnostics used and adapted for their own purposes important images and concepts from Plato in many areas, among which I will discuss five: (1) their portrayal of intelligible reality, (2) their analysis of the modes of Being and Non-Being, (3) their use of the dialectical method of collection and division, and (4) their portrayal of the ascent and descent of the soul in the reincarnational cycle, and (5) their view of demiurgical creation.

1) *Intelligible Reality*

In its portrayal of the realm of Intellect as containing the intelligible archetypes of physical realities such as the four elements, earth, sea, plants, animals, humans, souls, intellects, angels and gods, *Zostrianos* draws upon the visions of the upper world enjoyed by the gods and those souls who "follow" them in certain of Plato's most famous myths, *Phaedo* 109d–114c, *Phaedrus* 247a–249c, *Gorgias* 523a–6c, and *Republic* X 614b–621b.[23] Thus on page 48 Compare this passage from *Zostrianos* offers this description of the contents ofthe intelligible contents of the Self-generated Aeons at the periphery of the Barbelo Aeon:

22 See the observations of Schwyzer (1970) concerning Plotinus' interpretation of *Phlb*.

23 Cf. also *Zostrianos* NHC VIII 55.13–26; 113.1–114.19 and 116.1–6. Compare Plotinus' description of the "true earth" and "true heaven" in *Enn.* V 8 [31], 3.30–36, to which he adds the motif of mutual transparency: "but the gods in that higher heaven, all those who dwell upon it and in it, contemplate through their abiding in the whole of that heaven. For all things there are heaven, and earth and sea and plants and animals and men are heaven, everything which belongs to that higher heaven is heavenly … for it is "the easy life" there, and truth is their mother and nurse and substance and nourishment – and they see all things, not those to which coming to be, but those to which real being belongs, and they see themselves in other things; for all things there are transparent, and there is nothing dark or opaque; everything and all things are clear to the inmost part to everything; for light is transparent to light." Cf. also *Enn.* III 8 [30], 1–8; VI 2 [43], 21–22; VI 7 [38], 1–12.

> *Zostrianos* NHC VIII 48.3–26
> At each of the aeons I saw a living earth, a living water, luminous [air] and an [unconsuming] fire. All [these], being simple, are also immutable and simple [eternal living creatures], possessing a variety [of] beauty, trees of many kinds that do not perish, as well as plants of the same sort as all these, imperishable fruit, human beings alive with every species, immortal souls, every shape and species of intellect, gods of truth, angels dwelling in great glory with an indissoluble body [and] ingenerate offspring and unchanging perception.

Compare this with Socrates' description to Simmias of the "true earth" as the ideal archetype of the physical cosmos in the *Phaedo*:

> *Phd.* 109e–111c (in part)
> [...] if anyone should come to the top of the air or should get wings and fly up, he could lift his head above it ... he would see things in that upper world; and, if his nature were strong enough to bear the sight, he would recognize that that is the real heaven [110a] and the real light and the real earth [...]. and the things in that world above would be seen to be even more superior to those in this world of ours[...]. [110d] And in this fair earth the things that grow, the trees, and flowers and fruits, are correspondingly beautiful; and so too the mountains and the stones are smoother, and more transparent and more lovely in color than ours. In fact, our highly prized stones, sards and jaspers, and emeralds, and other gems, are fragments of those there, but there everything is like these or still more beautiful[...]. [111a] And there are many animals upon it, and men also, some dwelling inland, others on the coasts of the air, as we dwell about the sea, and others on islands, which the air flows around, near the mainland; and in short, what water and the sea are in our lives, air is in theirs, and what the air is to us, ether is to them[...]. [111c] And they have sacred groves and temples of the gods, in which the gods really dwell, and they have intercourse with the gods by speech and prophecies and visions, and they see the sun and moon and stars as they really are, and in all other ways their blessedness is in accord with this.

Interestingly, *Zostrianos* appears to associate Plato's notion of a "true earth" (*Phaedo* 110a, *hē hōs alēthōs gē*) also with a yet lower sub-intelligible realm situated between the physical cosmos itself and the Self-generated Aeons, which it calls the "airy earth" (*kah ᵉnaēr*). Conceived as the archetype or *logos* of the

sensible cosmos, it serves as a kind of "staging area" for souls in transit during a postmortem or visionary ascent from earth to the intelligible realms.[24]

2) *The Modes of Being and Non-Being*

Zostrianos further describes the contents of the Kalyptos Aeon – the topmost level of the intelligible Barbelo Aeon – using terminology derived from Plato's *Timaeus*, *Sophist* and *Parmenides* to show that it contains the archetypes of the entire realm of reality extending from the divine light itself all the way down to chaotic matter:

> *Zostrianos* NHC VIII 117.1–14
> It is there that all living creatures are,existing individually, although unified. The knowledge of the knowledge is there as well as a basis for ignorance. Chaos is there as well as a [place] for all of them, it being [complete] while they are incomplete. True light (is there), as well as enlightened darkness (i.e. intelligible matter) as well as that which truly is non-existent (i.e. gross matter), that [which] is not-truly existent (i.e. souls), [as well as] the non-existent ones that are not at all (i.e. sensibles).

Here, the Kalyptos Aeon contains the archetypes of all polarities, ultimate knowledge and ignorance, unordered chaos and organized place (cf. the receptacle of *Tim.* 52a8–b5), "true light" and "enlightened darkness." But it also contains 1) "that which is truly non-existent" (*ontōs ouk on*) i.e., gross matter, 2) "that [which] is not-truly existent" (*to ouk ontōs on*), i.e., souls as source of motion and change, as well as 3) the sensible entities that are moved by them, "the non-existent ones that are not at all" (*ouk ontōs ouk on*). In *Allogenes* page 55, these three negative categories of being are supplemented by the positive categories of "existing" and "truly existing":

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24 "Airy Earth" (*kah ᵉnaēr*): *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII) 5.17–18; 8.11; 9.1–9; 130.1; *Gos. Egypt.* (NHC III) 50.10 = NHC IV 62.9; "ethereal earth" (*kah ᵉnaerodios*): *Bruce Untitled* 20, [263.16–17 Schmidt–MacDermot]. Cf. the "new earth" (*kah ᵉnbrre*) in *Bruce Untitled* 12 [249.21 Schmidt–Macdermot] and the Manichaean *Kephalaia* § 55, and Plotinus, *Enn.* II.5.24–26: They say a "new earth" has come into being for them to which they will go away from this one; it is this which is the rational principle of the world. (καινὴν αὐτοῖς γῆν φασι γεγονέναι, εἰς ἣν δὴ ἐντεῦθεν ἀπελεύσονται· τοῦτο δὲ λόγον εἶναι κόσμου). The Sethian demotion of Plato's Airy Earth – presumably a metaphor for the realm of Forms – to an intermediate stratum above the physical cosmos but nevertheless distinctly below the superior (i.e., intelligible) aeons and its association of this realm with images and copies seems to be an excessively literal, and perhaps deliberately uncharitable, interpretation of the Platonic myth.

> *Allogenes* NHC XI 55.17–30
> Then the mother of] the glories Youel spoke to me again: ["O Allogenes], you [shall surely] know that the [Triple-Powered] One exists before [those that] do not exist, [those that exist] without [truly] existing (souls) and those that exist, [and those that] truly exist. [And all these] exist [in Divinity and Blessedness] [and] Existence, even as non-substantiality and non-being [Existence].

The ultimate source of these categories of being – which become virtual Neoplatonic definitions of intermediate metaphysical entities – are traditional propositional categories taken from Plato's *Sophist* and *Parmenides*.[25] In the *Parmenides* Plato uses them to examine Parmenides' assertion of the unity of the universe and his claim that it is impossible to speak of "what is not". In the *Sophist*, he uses them to show that the false teaching of the Sophists is equivalent to saying "what is not," a reality which – contrary to Parmenides – turns out to be intelligible after all.

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25 The significance of these various combinations of negative terms is clarified by Proclus, *in Tim.* I.233.1–4 [Diehl]: "Accordingly certain of the ancients call the noetic realm 'truly existent,' the psychic 'not truly existent,' the perceptible 'not truly non-existent,' and the material 'truly non-existent'" (διὸ καὶ τῶν παλαιῶν τινες ὄντως μὲν ὂν καλοῦσι τὸ νοητὸν πλάτος. οὐκ ὄντως δὲ ὂν τὸ ψυχικόν. οὐκ ὄντως δὲ οὐκ ὂν τὸ αἰσθητόν. ὄντως δὲ οὐκ ὂν τὴν ὕλην). According to Tournaire (1996), 63, the predicate ὄν means innately organized (intelligible or psychic), οὐκ ὄν means innately unorganized (sensible, material), while the qualifier ὄντως signifies what is stable or stabilized (intelligible or material), and οὐκ ὄντως signifies perceptible or intelligible reality subject to change; cf. Hadot (1968), vol. 1, 147–211) and Henry and Hadot (1960), vol. 2, 712. In Marius Victorinus, *Ad Candidum* 11.1–12 [Henri and Hadot] one finds the sequence *quae vere sunt, quae sunt, quae non vere non sunt, quae non sunt, quae non vere sunt, vere quae non sunt*. These terms and distinctions seem to originate with Plato, for example in the *Sph.* 240d9–240a1 and 254d1 there is the series ὄντως ὄν. οὐκ ὄντως οὐκ ὄν. ὄντως μὴ ὄν, and in the *Parm.* 162a6–b3 there is the series εἶναι ὄν. εἶναι μὴ ὄν. μὴ εἶναι μὴ ὄν. μὴ εἶναι ὄν. In *de Caelo* 282a4–b7 (reflected also in the *Categories*), Aristotle makes similar distinctions, using ἀεί instead of ὄντως. An attempt to invoke the same categories also occurs in a revelation cited in Codex Bruce, *Untitled*, 237, 20–23 [Schmidt and MacDermot]: "And when Phosilampes understood, he said: 'On account of him are those things which really and truly exist and those which do not exist truly. This is he on whose account are those that truly exist which are hidden, and those that do not exist truly which are manifest.'" Here the categories alternate between modes of being (both absolute and "hidden" being, intelligibles, and perhaps souls) and non-being (both absolute and visible non-being, matter, and perhaps sensible bodies), rather than exclusively between modes of non-being. Cf. also *Melchizedek* NHC IX 6.12–14; 16.18–19.

In the *Parmenides*, both being and non-being can be the subject of both affirmations and negations, while in the *Sophist* 238c, which distinguishes the copulative and existential senses of "be" ("not to be x" does not mean "not to exist"), regards "that which is not" (*to mē on auto kath' auton*) as beyond all predication, discourse and thought. Thus the absolute One of hypothesis I and the "One that is not" of hypothesis V are both beyond all predication, discourse and thought. On the other hand, according to the *Sophist* 240b1–13, Forms are that which truly exists (*ontōs onta*) and are the object of thought, while copies are not that which truly is (*ouk ontōs onta, ouk onta ontōs*), and thus cannot be the object of thought. According to *Sophist* 254d, the supreme category is *to on* while *to mē on* is indeterminate and may or may not really be non-existent (*to mē on hōs estin ontōs mē on*).

In the process, the *Sophist* presents a new theory of the Form of Being and its relation to the other most comprehensive forms, but without arranging them into a hierarchy of metaphysical levels of reality as did subsequent interpreters, such as the authors of *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes*, and later on other Neoplatonist philosophers and patristic thinkers such as Proclus and Marius Victorinus. The use of these logical categories indicates that these Gnostic authors were students of Plato's dialogues, not only of the popular protology of the *Timaeus*, but also of comparatively more abstruse dialogues such as the *Sophist* and *Parmenides*.[26]

3) *Dialectic*

The dialectical method of Plato's late dialogues the *Sophist*, *Statesman* and *Philebus* employ the methods of collection, division and definition in order to induce contemplation of the Ideas as the contents of the divine realm. Interestingly, a similar approach to transcendental epistemology occurs in three of the four Platonizing Sethian treatises. In *Marsanes*, the preliminary stages leading to Marsanes' vision of the supreme principles are occupied by discursive dialectic reasoning, specifically the same technique of collection and division:

> *Marsanes* NHC X 4.24–5.21
> For I am he who has [intelligized] that which truly exists, [whether] individually or [as a whole], by difference (*kata diaphoran* cf. *Rep*. VI 509d–511e) [I knew] that they [pre]-exist [in the] entire place that is eternal: all those that have come into existence, whether without substance or

26 See in general Turner (2007).

> with substance, those who are unbegotten, and the divine aeons, as well as the angels and the souls without guile and the soul-[garments], the images of [the] simple ones (souls?). And [afterwards they] were mixed with [those (i.e. their bodies) that were distinct from] them. But [even the] entire [perceptible] substance still resembles the [intelligible substance] as well as the insubstantial. [I have known] the entire corruption [of the former (the perceptible realm)] as well as the immortality of the latter. I have discriminated (*diakrinein* cf. *Sph.* 253d–e) and have attained the boundary of the partial, sense-perceptible world (and) the entire realm of the incorporeal essence. according to the parts of every place, the incorporeal substance and the intelligible cosmos; I knew, in the distinguishing (diakrinein), that the sensible cosmos was in every way worthy of being preserved entirely.

A similar procedure emerges in *Zostrianos* as an interpretation of a celestial "baptism":[27]

> *Zostrianos* NHC VIII 23.6–17
> And if one understands their origin, how they are all manifest in a single principle, and how all who are joined come to be divided, and how those who were divided join again, and how the parts [join with] the wholes and the species with the [genera] – when one understands these things – one has washed in the baptism of Kalyptos.

Similarly, dialectic activity prefaces Allogenes' contemplative ascent:

> *Allogenes* NHC XI 50.8–17
> I was able – even though flesh was upon me – to hear from <you> about these things. And because of the teaching that is in them, the thought

27 Largely in response to the metaphysical puzzlements that drive him to despair just prior to his ascent, *Zostrianos* NHC VIII 2.25–3.13: "How can beings – since they are from the aeon of those who derive from an invisible and undivided self-generated Spirit as triform unengendered images – both have an origin superior to Existence and pre-exist all [these] and yet have come to be in the [world]? How do those in its presence with all these [originate from the] Good [that is above]? What sort [of power] and [cause, and] what is [the] place of that [one]? What is its principle? How does its product belong both to it and all these? How, [being a] simple [unity], does it differ [from] itself, given that it exists as Existence, Form, and Blessedness, and, being vitally alive, grants power? How has Existence which has no being appeared in a power that has being?"

> within me distinguished things beyond measure from unknowable things.Therefore I fear that my wisdom has become excessive.

These Platonizing treatises have here drawn upon the *Phaedo*, *Sophist* and perhaps the *Republic* VI 509–11. Consider, for example, the stranger's dialogue with Theaetetus in *Sophist* 253b–e:

> *Sph.* 253b8–e2
> [Stranger:] Since we have agreed also that genera are the same [as other things previously discussed, some of which mix, and some of which don't] with respect to the ability to mix with one another, is it not necessary–– for one intending to show correctly which of the genera harmonize with which, and which do not receive one other–– to proceed through the arguments with some kind of science? And especially if [one intends to show] whether there is a [genus] which holds things together throughout the whole, so that they are able to be commingled, and again in the [case of] divisions, if there are other causes of the divisions throughout the whole?
> [Theaetetus:] How could one not need such a science, and indeed almost the greatest?
> [Stranger:] So what then will we call this science, Theaetetus? … Will we not declare it to be of the science of dialectic to divide according to genus, and to consider neither the same form to be another nor another to be the same?

In *Phdr.* 265d–266c, Plato distinguishes two kinds of dialectic, an ascending or "synoptic" (*Rep.* 537c) dialectic that moves (by recollection) from idea to idea to the supreme idea, and a descending, "diairetic" dialectic that moves from the highest idea and by division distinguishes within the general ideas particular ideas until one reaches ideas that do not include in themselves further ideas. One thus moves from multiplicity to unity and from unity to its expressed multiplicity.[28]

28 See *Phdr.* 249c: "For a human being must understand an utterance according to its Form, collecting into a unity by means of reason the many perceptions of the senses; and this is a recollection of those things which our soul once beheld, when it journeyed with God and, lifting its vision above the things which we now say exist, rose up into real being." The same dialectical procedure is further described in *Sph.* 253d–e: "[Stranger:] Shall we not say that the division (διαιρεῖσθαι) of things by classes and the avoidance of the belief

Phdr. 265d3–266c1
Now I myself, Phaedrus, am a lover of these processes of division and bringing together (daireseōn kai sunagagōn), as aids to speech and thought; and if I think any other man is able to see things that can naturally be collected into one and divided into many, him I follow after and walk in his footsteps as if he were a god. And whether the name I give to those who can do this is right or wrong, God knows, but I have called them hitherto dialecticians (dialektikous).

4) *The Ascent and Descent of the Soul*

Already in *Enn.* II 9 [33], 6.10–16 Plotinus had recognized that Gnostic teaching on the plight of the human soul was drawn from Plato: "Some of their ideas have been taken from Plato … the judgments too, and the rivers in Hades and the reincarnations come from there." The revelation of Ephesech in *Zostrianos* NHC VIII 44.1–46.31 offers a particularly convincing example:[29]

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that the same class is another, or another the same, belongs to the science of dialectic (διαλεκτικῆς … ἐπιστήμης)? [Theaetetus:] Yes, we shall. [Stranger:] Then, surely, he who can divide rightly is able to see clearly 1) one form pervading a discrete multitude, and 2) many different forms contained from without by one higher form; and again, 3) one form unified into a single whole and pervading many such wholes, and 4) many forms, existing only in separation and isolation. This is the knowledge and ability to distinguish (διακρίνειν κατὰ γένος ἐπίστασθαι) by classes how individual things can or cannot be associated with one another. [Theaetetus:] Certainly it is. [Stranger:] But you surely, I suppose, will not grant the art of dialectic to any but the man who pursues philosophy in purity and righteousness. [Theaetetus:] How could it be granted to anyone else? [Stranger:] Then it is in some region like this that we shall always, both now and hereafter, discover the philosopher, if we look for him." See Turner (2001), 475–478.

29 Cf. *Allogenes* NHC XI 64.14–36: "<Whether one sees> in what way he is unknowable, or sees him as he is in every respect or would say that he is something like knowledge, he has acted impiously against him, being liable to judgment because he did not know God. He will not be judged by that One, who is neither concerned for anything nor has any desire, but he is (judged) by himself because he has not found the truly existing Principle. He was blind apart from the quiescent eye (i.e., source) of (self-)manifestation, the actualization deriving from the Triple-Power of the Invisible Spirit's First Thought." See the thorough analysis of Mazur (2013) and (2014), which latter cites these Sethian passages as inspired by Plato's *Letter* II.312e4–313a6, according to which the soul begets evil when it seeks to comprehend the first principles that transcend categories such as quality and quantity through an inappropriate, even hubristic inquiry into their kind (ποῖόν). He also notes that the soul's experience of deficiency, turning about, having nothing, and separation, and standing [apart] and experiencing an "alien [impulse] instead of becoming a unity" are components of the Gnostic Sophia's failed attempt to know the supreme God.

Zostrianos NHC VIII 44.1–46.31

Now the person that can be saved is the one that seeks itself and its intellect and finds each of them. And how much power this (type) has! The person that has been saved is one who has not known about these things (merely) as they exist, but one who is personally involved with [the] rational faculty as it exists [in him]. He has grasped their [image that changes] in every situation as though they had become simple and one. For then this one is saved who can pass through [them] all; [he becomes] them all. Whenever he [wishes], he again parts from all these matters and withdraws into himself; for he becomes divine, having withdrawn into god …

[45] When this one repeatedly withdraws into himself alone and is occupied with the knowledge of other things, since the intellect and immortal [soul] do [not] intelligize, he thereupon experiences deficiency, for he too turns, has nothing, and separates from it (the intellect) and stands [apart] and experiences an alien [impulse] instead of becoming a unity. So that person resembles many forms. And when he turns aside, he comes into being seeking those things that do not exist. When he descends to (or: happens upon) them in thought, he cannot understand them in any other way unless [46] he be enlightened, and he becomes a physical entity. Thus this type of person accordingly descends into generation, and becomes speechless because of the difficulties and indefiniteness of matter. Although possessing eternal, immortal power, he is bound in the clutches of the body, [removed], and [continually] bound within strong bonds, lacerated by every evil spirit, until he once more [reconstitutes himself] and begins again to come to himself.

Therefore, for their salvation, there have been appointed specific powers, and these same ones inhabit this world. And among the Self-generated ones there stand at each [aeon] certain glories so that one who is in the [world] might be saved alongside [them]. The glories are perfect living concepts; it is [im-] possible that they perish because [they are] patterns (typos) of salvation, that is to say, anyone receiving them will be rescued to them, and being patterned will be empowered by this same (pattern), and having that glory as a helper, one thus passes through the world [and every aeon].

This passage is clearly built on a reading of Plato's dialogues, the *Phaedrus*' myth of reincarnational cycles, the *Phaedo*'s myth of post-mortem punishments, and the *Republic*'s myth of the ascent from the cave. One's ability to see the simplicity and unity of the ideal forms whose images comprise the furniture of the world guarantees its salvation, since it can withdraw at any time

from the world of images and inhabit the transcendent domain of the rational part of the soul that not only travels with the gods, but in fact is itself divine:

> *Phd.* 83a–b
> The lovers of knowledge, I say, perceive that philosophy, taking possession of the soul when it is in this state, encourages it gently and tries to set it free, pointing out that the eyes and the ears and the other senses are full of deceit, and urging it to withdraw from these, except in so far as their use is unavoidable, and exhorting it to collect and concentrate itself within itself, and to trust nothing except itself by itself and that thing itself among existing things which soul itself intelligizes by itself.

Yet despite its ability to withdraw from the world of images into itself and intellectually assimilate to the divine realm, it still lives in the world and inevitably become occupied with other matters, with the result that its intellection becomes inhibited. Such souls experience a cognitive deficiency, "a loss of wings" (*Phdr.* 246; 249); they are dragged down from the heights (*Phdr.* 248a–b; cf. *Phd.* 81c–d; 109e) away from unity by appetition for the physical delights that do not have true existence. The result is the reincarnation of the soul in the realm of becoming.[30] In spite of its immortal power, the soul is caught in the reincarnational cycle, bound in the clutches of a physical body, temporarily freed at death, and then rebound in the indeterminateness of formless matter (cf. *Phlb.* 41d) in another reincarnation (*Phd.* 81d; 83d), lost in suffering (*Phd.* 108b).

While there is a strong similarity between Plotinus' and *Zostrianos*' appropriation of Platonic teaching, it is clear that *Zostrianos*' announcement of the availability of certain "glories" as divine helpers that ensure the ultimate salvation of souls, is a notion that has no warrant in the thought of Plato and many subsequent Platonists.

5) *The Demiurge of the Timaeus and the Sethian Creator*

According to the *Timaeus* 30b8–9, the universe "has come about through divine providence." Generously modeled on the eternal reality by a good and

30 *Phdr.* 248c–d: "And this is a law of Destiny, that the soul which follows after God and obtains a view of any of the truths is free from harm until the next period, and if it can always attain this, is always unharmed; but when, through inability to follow, it fails to see, and through some mischance is filled with forgetfulness and evil and grows heavy, and when it has grown heavy, loses its wings and falls to the earth, then it is the law that this soul shall never pass into any beast at its first birth, but the soul that has seen the most shall enter into the birth of a man."

intelligent Demiurge, the universe is exempt from destruction by the everlasting bond of his providence. By contrast, the Gnostic world creator is an inferior fabricator who makes a defective universe according to an archetype he cannot directly see, clearly a negative parody of Plato's Demiurge. According to the Sethian *Apocryphon of John*:[31]

> *Apocryphon of John* NHC II 12.33–13.5
> Now he put everything in order, in the likeness of the first aeons that had come into being, so as to create them in an incorruptible pattern – not that he himself had actually seen the incorruptible things – rather, it was the power within him that he had received from his Mother, since she had begotten within him the likeness of the cosmos.

In the *Apocryphon of John*, the Archon of creation Yaldabaoth – who is *himself* amorphous and chaotic – is no true demiurge.[32] Even though he thinks he is copying an *image* of the eternal aeonic paradigm, he cannot directly see it and thus produces a chaotic copy with more similarity to his own being than to the image he copies. And his ability to copy what he does is due – not to his ungrudging intelligence or to his vision of the supreme realities – but to the power he stole from his mother Sophia, by which an unintended element of perfection has nevertheless come to dwell in his creation.

A slightly different version of the world creator's demiurgical activity is offered by the Platonizing Sethian treatise *Zostrianos*. In contrast to the incorruptible "airy earth" which originated by a rational principle (*logos*) as the direct archetype of the physical cosmos, we learn of the physical cosmos as "a [substance] and principle of matter, the dark, corrupt [product]," whose precosmic formlessness and shapelessness seems to make room for worldly things (*ko*[*smikon nim*) in a way reminiscent of the receptacle of *Timaeus*

31 See Turner (2006), 10–24. In all four versions of *Apocryphon of John*, there is a supreme trinity of the Invisible Spirit, Barbelo (also called *Pronoia* and "the womb of the all" resembles the Providence of *Tim.* 30b and the receptacle of *Tim.* 48e–52d), and Autogenes, who are called Father, Mother, and Child in obvious allusion to Plato, *Tim.* 50cd. Together with the Child's four Luminaries and their attendant Aeons form the equivalent of the realm of Forms, i.e., the *Timaeus*' truly living being. Sophia, the lowest of the Aeons, apparently playing the role of Necessity or the errant cause of *Tim.* 47e–48a, generates the world-creator as an aborted offspring who, together with his archontic assistants, are modeled on the figures of the demiurge and younger gods of *Tim.* 41a–42e.

32 Note that Sethian, unlike Valentinian, sources never call the world creator "demiurge,"

48e–52d. Here, Sophia, apparently inhabiting this archetypal "airy earth," does not herself descend nor does she give rise to the Archon. Instead, she merely "looks down", thereby illumining the lower precosmic darkness or matter, in effect generating an initial "material image" of herself – itself deceptive and intermittent (*Zost.* 10.16) – that serves as the archetype on which the demiurge attempts to model the cosmos as "an image of an image."[33] But when Sophia repents and is restored to the Pleroma, her image reflected in matter similarly vanishes, leaving the demiurge to rely upon on his own imagination (*phantazesthai*) of Sophia's now missing image in order to create the cosmos:

> *Zostrianos* NHC VIII 9.27–10.20
> When Sophia looked [down], she saw the darkness, [illumining it] while maintaining [her own station], being [a] model for [worldly] things, [a principle] for the [insubstantial] substance [and the form]less form [...] a [shapeless] shape. [It makes room] for [every cosmic thing ...] the All [...] the corrupt product. Since it is a rational principle that persuades] the darkness, [he sows from his] reason, since it [is im]possible [for the archon] of [creation] to see any of the eternal entities. 10 He saw a reflection, and with reference to the reflection that he [saw] therein, he created the world. With a reflection of a reflection he worked upon the world, and then even the reflection of the appearance was taken from him. But Sophia was given a place of rest in exchange for her repentance. In consequence, because there was within her no pure, original image, either pre-existing in him or that had already come to be through him, he used his imagination and fashioned the remainder, for the image belonging to Sophia is always corrupt [and] deceptive. But the Archon – [since he simulates] and embodies by [pursuing the image] because of the superabundance [that inclined downward] – looked downward.

Like Plato's Demiurge, the Archon of creation here has the task of acting the role of "reason persuading necessity" (as in *Tim.* 48a). He "[sows from his] reason," which turns out to be only his imagination. Rather than looking above to the paradigmatic living being and the forms therein (*Tim.* 39e), he can only look down and chase after fleeting and dim reflections of the images of whatever forms have been projected into the dark substrate of matter, not the true forms

33 *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII 9.17–10.20) from which Plotinus virtually cites about eleven lines in *Enn.* II 9 [33], 10.19–32. This dependence was first discovered by Tardieu (2005).

themselves or even their direct images.[34] In this way, *Zostrianos* combines, not only a negative parody of the demiurge as portrayed in the main creation account of the *Timaeus* (29d7–47e2, esp. 39e) – the works of Reason – but also features from its subsequent account of the works of Necessity (48e–52d), not to mention Plato's critique of mimetic demiurgy in the *Sophist*[35] and *Republic*.

IV Conclusion

The preceding instances of the interpretation of key elements of Plato's teaching in the Sethian Platonizing treatises demonstrate that these Gnostic authors were thoroughly immersed in the dialogues of Plato. While the Gnostic authors fail to acknowledge Plato as the originator of these teachings and instead ascribe them to divine revelation, one cannot escape the conclusion that the common knowledge of their readers would have grasped allusions to these dialogues – some popular and some not so popular – in their understanding of these treatises as, not only divinely revealed, but as reinforced by the traditional wisdom of "the ancient philosophy."

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34 As the Stranger says in *Sph.* 235d–236c, while "images" (εἰκόνα) are "like" (εἰκός) but "other than" (ἕτερον) the true "original" (παράδειγμα), "imaginations" (φαντάσματα) are associated with "reflections" (εἴδωλα) that only appear to resemble reality but actually do not.

35 Plato, *Sph.* 235d–236b: [Stranger:] I think I see this time also two classes of imitation, but I do not yet seem to be able to make out in which of them the form we are seeking is to be found. [Theaetetus:] Please first make the division and tell us what two classes you mean. [Stranger:] I see the likeness-making art as one part of imitation. This is met with, as a rule, whenever anyone produces the imitation by following the proportions of the original in length, breadth, and depth, and giving, besides, [235e] the appropriate colors to each part. [Theaetetus: Yes, but do not all imitators try to do this? [Stranger:] Not those who produce some large work of sculpture or painting. For if they reproduced the true proportions of beautiful forms, the upper parts, you know, would seem smaller [236a] and the lower parts larger than they ought, because we see the former from a distance, the latter from near at hand. [Theaetetus:] Certainly. [Stranger:] So the artists (*dēmiourgoi*) abandon the truth and give their figures (*eidōlois*) not the actual proportions but those which seem (*doxousas*) to be beautiful, do they not? [Theaetetus: Certainly. [Stranger: That, then, which is other, but like, we may fairly call a likeness, may we not? [Theaetetus: Yes. [236b] [Stranger:] And the part of imitation which is concerned with such things, is to be called, as we called it before, likeness-making? [Theaetetus:] It is to be so called. [Stranger:] Now then, what shall we call that which appears, because it is seen from an unfavorable position, to be like the beautiful, but which would not even be likely to resemble that which it claims to be like, if a person were able to see such large works adequately? Shall we not call it, since it appears, but is not like, a phantom (*eoike de ou, fantasma*)?

CHAPTER 16

Plotinus and Platonism

Lloyd P. Gerson

I Introduction

G.W.F. Hegel thought that Proclus was a more authentic interpreter of Plato than was Plotinus because Plotinus was too influenced by Aristotle.[1] Proclus himself thought that Plotinus was the leading exegete of "the Platonic revelation".[2] Proclus knew perfectly well that, as Porphyry says in his *Life of Plotinus*, the *Enneads* are full of "Peripatetic and Stoic doctrines".[3] But Proclus did not think that Plotinus' exegesis was for that reason less accurate or profound. It is worth reflecting for a moment on the different evaluations of the *Enneads* by Hegel and by Proclus.

Hegel evidently believed that the Aristotelian "elements" in the *Enneads* compromised or diluted the pure Platonism found, above all, in Proclus' *Platonic Theology*. It probably did not occur to Hegel that Aristotle's objections to facets of Plato's philosophy or his employment of new technical terms and distinctions could have been made *within* the framework of Platonism such that one could absorb, endorse, or otherwise employ Aristotle without compromising one's commitment to Plato. Indeed, even if Hegel considered this possibility, he certainly would not have countenanced a similar explanation for Plotinus' use of Stoicism. There is no question that Plotinus thought himself to be an orthodox Platonist – whatever this meant exactly in the 3rd century CE – and that this orthodoxy was not at all compromised by having recourse to the truth wherever it may be found. That it should be found in Aristotle is perhaps somewhat less surprising than that it should be found among the Stoics. Nevertheless, Plotinus was sensible enough to realize that in the 600 or so years that separated him from Plato, philosophy was not frozen or dead. Indeed, though Plotinus believed that Plato was the supreme philosophical master, he also believed that Plato was not the first or the only one to hit on the truth.

1 See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Bd. 19 of *Werke in Zwanzig Bänden.* Moldenhauer and Michel (eds.) (1970/1986), 438 and 443.

2 See *Théologie Platonicienne.* Saffrey and Westerink (eds.) (1968), I 1, 6.16–20.

3 See *V.Plot.* §14, 5.

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Unlike Plotinus, modern scholars tend to blur the distinction between what we find in the dialogues of Plato and a general philosophical position or worldview that we name "Platonism". Hence, it seems strange to ask if Plato was a Platonist.[4] Plotinus, of course, does think Plato was a Platonist, that is, a proponent of a venerable systematic philosophical position, but he is quite clear on the distinction between the position and its expression, whether in writing or orally. Precisely because of this distinction, Plotinus does not pay serious attention to the structural integrity of any dialogue. That is, he is willing to cite or allude to three, four, five, or even more dialogues in one argument over a few sentences.[5] It is not that Plotinus is oblivious to the dramatic unity of each of the dialogues. Rather, he denies that the dramatic unity in any one case points us to a doctrinal or systematic unity.[6]

Where, then, does that unity come from? We may, I think, infer from Porphyry's account that it comes principally from the oral tradition to which Plotinus adhered.[7] Plotinus received his Platonic doctrine from his teacher Ammonius Saccas, who himself wrote nothing. Plotinus, we are told, vowed to transmit the doctrine he had acquired from Ammonius exclusively in speech. As Porphyry tells it, when one, and then another, of Plotinus' classmates broke the pledge not to write anything, Plotinus decided that there was no point in his not committing his understanding of Platonism to paper. The period during which Plotinus was teaching in Rome and writing nothing was ten years or so. That means that Plotinus did not write a thing until he was about 50 years old. One can scarcely

4 Strange or not, there are some who ask this question and answer it definitely in the negative. Gadamer (1986), 508 held that "Platon war kein Platoniker" and Ryle (1966), 9–10, averred that "If Plato was anything of a philosopher, then he cannot have been merely a lifelong Platonist". Similarly, Theiler (1960), 67, held that Plotinus' Plato is a "Platon *dimidiatus*" precisely because Plotinus focused on the Platonism, not the exegesis of the dialogues.

5 A good example is IV 8 [6], 1 "On the Descent of Soul into Bodies", where *Phd.*, *Rep.*, *Phdr.*, *Crat.*, and *Tim.* are cited in short order in a sort of exegetical parataxis. A bit of Heraclitus and Empedocles are also thrown in for good measure. Also, see IV 8, 1.26–31. Plotinus is here arguing for the coherence of his account of Platonism with what is found in the dialogues. See Koch (2013), 67, on the absence of any ordering of the dialogues by Plotinus for the purpose of exposition.

6 Plotinus' interpretation of Plato is a stellar example of fidelity to the principle found *apud* Stobaeus, *Ecl.* II 7.3f, 4a, 49.25–50.1, 55.5–6 that Plato in the dialogues is πολύφωνος but not πολύδοξος. The decisive systematic articulation by Plotinus of the contents of the dialogues, along with the oral teachings seems to have encouraged later Platonists to focus more than Plotinus did on the aim or σκοπός of each dialogue and so examine more closely the dramatic structure of each.

7 See Porphyry, *V.Plot.* 3.25ff.

suppose that what Plotinus was refraining from writing was simple exegesis of widely available dialogues. On the contrary, he evidently pledged to Ammonius not to put in writing the doctrine that was other than the contents of dialogues dramatically defined. This does not mean, of course, that the dialogues were irrelevant. Rather, they seem essential to helping us acquire the doctrine. The 1,500 or so references to the dialogues in the *Enneads* are sufficient evidence to eliminate the possibility of neglecting the dialogues as far as Plotinus is concerned. It means only that the systematic structure of Platonism is not reproducible from the dialogues alone.[8] It is this systematic structure that makes the dialogues intelligible and it is also what justifies the exegetical parataxis.

What Hegel found objectionable in the *Enneads* was, in fact, the presence of material (far more than Aristotle and the Stoics) that testifies to this systematic doctrine. The testimony is relevant and important *especially* when it is critical of Plato, for that criticism reveals to us the doctrine that is being scrutinized.[9] Plotinus thinks that Aristotle is a dissident Platonist, both embracing the general principles of Platonism and rejecting Plato's application of those principles to metaphysical, epistemological, psychological, and ethical matters. Everything that Plotinus says in the *Enneads* about Plato's dialogues is conditioned by his understanding of Plato's Platonism.[10] This is true as much for his exegesis of myths as well as of philosophical argumentation. Let us begin, then, with Plotinus' basic understanding of Platonism.

II

The passage most widely cited as the basis for Plotinus' systematic interpretation of Plato is from V 1 [10] where Plotinus refers to Plato's *Parmenides*:

8 See Charrue (1978), 135–8, on Plotinus' recognition of the difficulties of constructing a systematic expression of Platonism from the dialogues alone.

9 The principal objection to the thesis of Harold Cherniss that Aristotle's testimony about Plato's philosophy is unreliable is that Cherniss assumed that Aristotle was focusing exclusively on the dialogues, which do not in many cases seem to contain the claims that Aristotle is criticizing. But nowhere does Arisotle say that his criticisms are aimed at the dialogues, although he certainly cites them abundantly. Nevertheless like Plotinus, he cites them as evidence of the underlying doctrine as he understands that, not as self-standing philosophical arguments.

10 There is an intriguing – and rare – statement of a Plotinian hermeneutical principle at III 7 [45], 13.15–18, where Plotinus suggests that Aristotle has perhaps not made his view on the nature of time sufficiently precise in his writings because he was writing for people who already knew his view from his lectures. I take this point to be plausibly applicable to Plotinus' attempts to clarify and systematize what he finds in the dialogues.

> But Parmenides in Plato [as opposed to the historical Parmenides] speaks more accurately when he distinguishes from each other the primary One, which is strictly One, from the secondary One which is a one-many, and the third which is one and many. In this way he, too, is in harmony with the three natures.[11]

We should begin by noting that Plotinus says that what the literary Parmenides (a mouthpiece for Plato, according to Plotinus) says is "in harmony" with the "three natures". He does not suppose that *Parmenides* is the *locus classicus*, so to speak, for the doctrine itself. The doctrine, according to Plotinus, is expressed, alluded to, or employed, in the *2nd Epistle*, *Republic*, *Philebus,* and elsewhere.[12] The point is of some importance since there are many things that Plotinus says about the "primary One" that cannot plausibly be drawn from the second part of *Parmenides*.[13] The evaluation of Plotinus' account of Platonism and, by a

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11 V 1 [10], 8. 23–27: Ὁ δὲ παρὰ Πλάτωνι Παρμενίδης ἀκριβέστερον λέγων διαιρεῖ ἀπ' ἀλλήλων τὸ πρῶτον ἕν, ὃ κυριώτερον ἕν, καὶ δεύτερον ἓν πολλὰ λέγων, καὶ τρίτον ἓν καὶ πολλά. Καὶ σύμφωνος οὕτως καὶ αὐτός ἐστι ταῖς φύσεσι ταῖς τρισίν. Most translators supply something like "the doctrine of" or "die Lehre von" or "la théorie des" before the words "the three natures". I would resist this as unnecessary and misleading since it is implausible to take the second part of *Parm.* as directly or straightforwardly expressing doctrine. Igal has the more accurate version: "Parménides está de acuerdo con las tres Naturalezas". On my interpretation, Plato has Parmenides make "logical" remarks about hypothetical principles. What he says is indeed "in harmony" with a doctrine of principles, but one has to go elsewhere for a positive expression of that doctrine. This is the passage Trouillard (1973), 9, refers to as announcing the "beginning" of Neoplatonism. Cf. Brisson (1994), 287.

12 Plotinus accepted the authenticity of *Epistle II*, although he uses the crucial passage (312e) merely as confirmatory of the primacy of the "three natures". We might well consider the possibility that, given the fact that the letter is spurious, it provides us with evidence of how the oral tradition adheres to the interpretation to which Plotinus adheres.

13 This is in contrast to Proclus who, following his teacher Syrianus, believes that the second part of *Parm.* contains the main expression of Plato's theology. See Proclus, *In Parm.* 630.26–643.4. For the likely Iamblichean origin of the view of the primacy of *Parm.*, see Proclus, *In Tim.* I 13.14–19 and *Proleg.* 26, 39.18–21. Proclus expands on this claim at some length in his *PT* I 7, 31.7–32.12 and I 8, 32.15–18 in reply to an objection that Plato's theological principles are found variously and unsystematically in all the dialogues. Against this objection, he claims that all Plato's principles of theology are contained in *Parm*. Cf. I 12, 56.17–24. This dialogue is the baseline for the interpretation of all the rest. Proclus' approach is radically different from that of Plotinus, as Hegel saw. It is also worth noting that the medieval Latin *Liber de causis*, translated from what is essentially a compendium of Proclean metaphysics, deviates from Proclus and employs Plotinus wherever Proclus' metaphysics was thought to be in variance from the metaphysical basis of

sort of attraction, his interpretation of the dialogues, for many scholars, hinges on the above passage. The most widely held view in the English-speaking world – Dodds and Cornford being two of the main catalysts – is that Plotinus' understanding of the second part of *Parmenides* is *obviously* wide of the mark.[14] For them, this error infects all, or almost all, of Plotinus' other interpretative claims. Without meaning to suggest that the passage in V 1 is trivial in its implications, I would insist that Plotinus' understanding of the "three natures" is both more nuanced than is often supposed and, most importantly, is firmly and widely grounded in the dialogues, taken in conjunction with Aristotle's testimony and with the other indirect sources.

The first of the "three natures", the "primary One", is, following Aristotle's testimony, identical with the Idea of the Good of *Republic*.[15] The Idea of the Good is "the unhypothetical first principle of all" and beyond "existence and being" (τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ οὐσίαν).[16] Aristotle testifies that Plato identified the Good with the One and that the Forms were derived from the One and the Indefinite Dyad by the former acting on the latter. The One of the first hypothesis of the second part of *Parmenides* is also said to be beyond existence and being because it is "nothing but One" that is, uniquely self-identical. Of course, the positing of such a first principle, the identification of it with the Good, its mode of activity, and the motivation for introducing an Indefinite Dyad are among the many deep puzzles that the dialogues and the testimony have bequeathed us. Much of the history of Platonism, at least until the middle of the 6th century CE, is devoted to addressing these puzzles. My point here is only that Plotinus has no doubt – and he has good reason to have no doubt – that Plato is committed to such a principle. Moreover, since Plotinus, like Plato (and Aristotle) believes that philosophy begins and ends in *first* philosophy, that is, a search for ultimate explanations, it is hardly surprising that the One has either explicitly or implicitly a role to play in virtually all Plotinus' interpretations of Plato arguments and claims in the dialogues. For example, Plotinus is never content to say that a Form is an ultimate explanation or that Forms in general are *termini* of explanatory paths except in narrowly constrained circumstances.

Islamic theology. My point is not the "suitability" of Plotinus for Islamic theology, but the awareness by the author of this anonymous work of a fundamental difference between Plotinus and Proclus, particular with regard to the nature of the first principle of all. See D'Ancona (2014), 144–7.

14 See Dodds (1928); Cornford (1939); Trouillard (1973).

15 See Aristotle, *Metaph.* A 6, 987a29–988a17, N 4, 1091b13–15; *EE* A 8, 1218a15–28; Aristoxenus, *The Elements of Harmony* II 20.16–31.3 Macran (= pg.111 Ross).

16 See *Rep.* 509b6–10.

It probably never even occurred to him that the absence of an explicit step beyond Forms to the One in a given dialogue meant that it was somehow illicit to adduce that principle in behalf of understanding Plato's solution to a particular problem.

As for the second nature, which in *Parmenides* is found in the second hypothesis and is paraphrased by Plotinus as "one-many", Plotinus assumes that this is to be identified with the Demiurge in *Timaeus*, an eternal Intellect (Νοῦς) which is the locus of and provider of intelligibility to the sensible cosmos.[17] An important facet of Plotinus' interpretation of the Demiurge or Intellect as the second nature is that he argues that Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, though not explicitly identified with the Demiurge or Intellect, is intended by Aristotle to serve the functional role that Plato's principle is intended to serve.[18] That is, just as the Demiurge is posited by Plato as the unique cause of a range of possible and actual effects in the sensible world, so is the Unmoved Mover similarly posited. The very fact that the latter does not quite fit the characterization of the Demiurge in *Timaeus* or elsewhere only means for Plotinus that a shared principle – that of the necessity of a unique cause for a specific range of phenomena – can be variously characterized by Plato, on the one hand, and his disciples more or less faithful to the master, on the other.

Plato's Demiurge is eternally a contemplator of Forms. But he is also a maker of the cosmos.[19] Although Plotinus dismisses as metaphorical and heuristic much of the talk in *Timaeus* about the discursive activity of the Demiurge, he does not take the situation of the Demiurge within the Platonic system as problematic.[20] So, the Demiurge acts because his contemplation of the Good is the way he partakes of it. And since the Good is essentially self-diffusive, the Demiurge naturally and spontaneously produces all that it can. This is to say that the Demiurge or Intellect is the instrument of the Good.[21] In other words, the contemplative activity and the productive activity of the Demiurge

17 See II 3 [52], 18.15; IV 4 [28], 10.1–4; V 1 [10], 1.8.5, etc.

18 See V 9 [5], 3.25–26.

19 See III 9 [13], 1.23–36, where Plotinus says that Plato, cryptically, seems to hold that the maker of the cosmos is the cosmic soul and not Intellect eternally contemplating intelligibles. The cryptic nature of this claim arises from the fact that the maker has been also identified with the Intellect or Demiurge. See *Tim.* 47e3–48a2 with 29d–31a. Cf. IV 8 [6], 1.23–28 on the difficulties in reconciling Plato's remarks on soul.

20 See e.g., III 2 [47], 2.12–15; IV 8 [6], 8.11–16.

21 See VI 7 [38], 42.21–24. Also, see II 9 [33], 6.14–24 where Plotinus excoriates Gnostics for their uncritical reading of Plato's *Tim.*

could not be reconciled or made consistent if both were not situated within the larger metaphysical framework. Thus, systematization is necessary to bring consistency to Plato's multifarious claims in particular dialogues and among the dialogues.[22]

The third nature, which Plotinus calls one *and* many, is supposedly found in the third hypothesis.[23] It is less clear than in the above two cases that this passage in the dialogue refers to what Plotinus calls the principle Soul, that which, distinct from and inferior to Intellect, is the principle of the soul of the cosmos and all individual souls, whether divine, human, animal, or plant. It is beyond doubt, however, that Soul plays the role of principle in Plato, especially, but not only, as the principle of motion in the cosmos.[24] That is sufficient ground for Plotinus to make it a distinct hypostasis. The relation between Intellect or the Demiurge and Soul, however, is not straightforward either in Plato or in Plotinus. In particular, it has been argued by a number of scholars that if the Demiurge has a life, then it must itself have soul which, if anything, makes its creation of soul somewhat obscure. On the one hand, one could say that the Demiurge is himself a soul who creates the souls of the cosmos and the gods and the other living animals. But this leaves the relation between his soul and his intellect especially problematic since the Demiurge makes souls out of ingredients markedly different from the Demiurge's own composition. In particular, created soul has a form of existence that is a combination of indivisible and divisible being.[25] The Demiurge, by contrast, must be made of the same stuff as the Forms if he is to know them eternally.[26] In addition, souls are

22 A particularly important example of the need for systematization is again taken from *Tim*. Plato says that the Receptacle of becoming exists prior to the production of the cosmos by the Demiurge. But since the Demiurge must operate as instrument of the One or Good, it would seem that the Receptacle must exist prior to the One's activity. But this is impossible since all things, including even matter or the Receptacle depend on the One for their existence. So, Plotinus needs to develop a systematic understanding of creation that at once entails existential dependence of everyone on the One and allows for the instrumental causality of Intellect and Soul.

23 It is perhaps the case that Plotinus does not mean to suggest that the entire third hypothesis (155e–157b) is focused exclusively on the hypostasis Soul. Rather, since that hypothesis is concerned with the realm of temporal becoming, Plotinus supposed that the generation of the soul of the cosmos and the other souls by the Demiurge in *Tim.* 34aff, along with the generation of time, provides the relevant background for the logical deductions made in *Parm.*

24 See *Phdr.* 246b and *Leg.* X.

25 See *Tim.* 35a1–4.

26 See *Tim.* 29e1–3 with 30c2–d1 and the so-called Affinity Argument of *Phd.* 78b4–84b4.

made to be joined with bodies, which is why they have a form of divisible being whereas the Demiurge has no such requirement.[27]

There is some reason to believe that Plotinus supposed the hypostasis Soul to be the life of the Living Animal, that is, the locus of the Forms which the Demiurge uses as model for the cosmos. The key passage in Plato in support of this is one to which Plotinus turns repeatedly. In *Sophist*, we find the famous refutation of the Idealists, with the rhetorical affirmation:

> Are we really going to be so easily persuaded that motion, life, soul, and thought have no place in that which is completely real; that is has neither life nor thinking, but stands immovable, holy, and solemn, devoid of intellect?[28]

This much discussed passage presents its own problems. But Plotinus never doubted that here Plato intends to situate life and soul in that which is really real, namely, the Living Animal which is the paradigm for all intelligibility in the cosmos. There is no indication that the Living Animal has a particular life or soul any more than Intellect is or has a particular intellect. It seems reasonable that Plotinus would assume that the intelligible reality of the hypostasis Soul just is the property of the Living Animal.[29]

The bulk of Plotinus' writings is devoted to working out a consistent and systematic expression of these three hypostases and in that expression applying them to the solution of particular philosophical problems concerning the nature of evil, freedom of the will, divine providence, embodied and disembodied cognition, etc. The claim that systematic expression of the One, Intellect, and Soul in the dialogues is absent hardly requires a defense. What does seem today to require a defense is Plotinus' belief that a systematic expression is to be had.[30]

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27 The immortal parts of human and divine souls, namely, their intellects, are, like the Demiurge, of course, capable of knowing Forms. But insofar as a disembodied intellect is in principle able to be reinserted into a body, we must suppose that this is because soul is a composite being different from intellect.

28 *Sph.* 248e6–249e2: Τί δὲ πρὸς Διός; ὡς ἀληθῶς κίνησιν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ φρόνησιν ἦ ῥᾳδίως πεισθησόμεθα τῷ παντελῶς ντι μὴ παρεῖναι, μηδὲ ζῆν αὐτὸ μηδὲ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ σεμνὸν καὶ ἅγιον, νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον, ἀκίνητον ἑστὸς εἶναι;

29 As we later learn in *Sph.* 254dff, the "greatest Kinds" namely, Identity, Difference, Being, Motion, and Rest are that which enables the Forms to be articulated. The Demiurge, insofar as he is identical with all that he cognizes, must, accordingly, possess these. But he does not possess any of these in their *divisible* form.

30 I would suggest that Plotinus' attitude to the systematic expression of the written thoughts of Plato is analogous to Thomas Aquinas' attitude to the systematic theological expression of Scripture.

Plotinus, reasonably enough, assumes that Plato believes that there is a superordinate Idea of the Good, a Demiurge, and soul which is evidently rooted in a principle. Aristotle and the other members of the Academy evince no doubt that a systematic expression of Platonism is possible and underlies everything that we read in the dialogues. I will take it as sufficient for my purposes here that what Plotinus does with the dialogues is both philosophically and exegetically defensible, while having no intention whatsoever of asserting his infallibility in either regard.

In the remainder of this paper, I want to discuss several of the main problems Plotinus faced in systematizing Platonism and then briefly discuss how he applies the system to some of the most important problems facing philosophers in the 3rd century.

III

The first problem is, as Plotinus somewhat plaintively puts it, how are we supposed to derive a "many" from the One.[31] If the One is to be the unhypothetical first principle of all, there must be *some* sort of derivation, the converse of the One's role as the ultimate explanation for any "many" or plurality. And yet, if it is to be the first principle, it must be absolutely simple or incomposite. Plotinus follows Plato exactly in holding that even the minimal complexity of something that exists and has a nature of some sort cannot be attributed to the One.[32] So, once again, how can any "many" be derived from the first principle? Another way to characterize the problem is to take it as following from the Parmenidean principle – embraced by Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and virtually every philosopher in pagan antiquity – that no thing can be derived from nothing. That is, if there is no complexity in the One, how can any sort of complexity arise?

Plotinus' solution is a wonderful example of the way he combines what he certainly takes to be faithful exegesis of Plato's thought and his own philosophical reflection. Although the One is simple, there are a number of things

31 See V 3 [49] 15, 6–7. Henceforth, I shall just refer to the One or the Good as required rather than the awkward "One/Good". But I ask the reader to bear in mind that Plotinus can scarcely be supposed to have ever reflected on the One without supposing its identification with the Idea of the Good or on the Good without supposing that it is the One.

32 See *Parm.* 142b5–6 where a putative 'one' that exists and partakes of oneness cannot be first because there would then be a distinction between it and the nature in which it partakes.

that, following Plato, can be said of it, the most important here being that it is "beyond being (or 'essence'), surpassing in seniority and in power" (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβείᾳ καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος).[33] To this, we need to add the claim in *Sophist* made on behalf of the argument against materialists that the definition or mark of that which is real is that it has or is "power" (δύναμις) of some sort, power to do anything or experience anything at all.[34] So, that would seem to make the One the most powerful of all if for no other reason at least because any diminution or limitation on its power would involve it having some property or nature that caused that limitation. But since having *any* properties would immediately introduce complexity, it can have none. The One, then, is absolutely powerful.[35] But how is this possible?

In order to understand how Plotinus "receives" Plato and Platonism, it is, I think, important to emphasize that there is nothing explicit in the dialogues or in Aristotle's testimony or in the indirect tradition to indicate how Plato solves this problem. Let us say simply that Plotinus obtains the solution from Aristotle, especially in the sense that he employs an Aristotelian term in working out the solution that does not even appear in Plato. How does this "turn" to Aristotle not betray Plotinus' allegiance to Plato? Plotinus understands that Aristotle, exactly like Plato, has come to the conclusion that there must be a first principle of all and that it must be absolutely simple. This first principle is supposed to provide ultimate explanatory adequacy. So, any insight Aristotle is able to attain in regard to the nature of this principle is valuable for Plotinus in articulating the system that is Platonism. The principal Aristotelian insight is that the first principle of all must be nothing but "activity" (ἐνέργεια).[36] There can be no potentiality in it because that would imply compositeness or complexity, analogous to but not identical with the complexity that would be implied by a "one" having both existence and essence.

Aristotle goes on to make what for Plotinus is a crucial mistake. He identifies this activity as "thinking" or the "activity of thinking".[37] This is a mistake because thinking, Plotinus argues, involves intentionality and hence the internal complexity consisting of thinker and object of thinking to say nothing of an additional complexity introduced if the objects of thinking are multiple.[38] Plotinus sees Aristotle as more or less correctly characterizing what is in fact

33 See *Rep.* 509b8–9.

34 See *Sph.* 248d8–e4.

35 See esp. Aubry (2006), chs. 6 and 7.

36 See Aristotle, *Metaph.* Λ 7, 1071b19–20: δεῖ ἄρα εἶναι ἀρχὴν τοιαύτην ἧς ἡ οὐσία ἐνέργεια.

37 See Aristotle, *Metaph.* Λ 7, 1072b14ff.

38 See V 6 [24] 1.1–14 and Gerson (2005), 205–208.

the second principle Intellect, but falsely characterizing the first principle of all. And yet, Plotinus embraces the Aristotelian insight that the first principle can be absolutely simple if it is nothing but activity or ἐνέργεια. So, Plotinus combines the claim from Plato that the first principle is absolutely simple and powerful with Aristotle's claim that the first principle must be nothing but activity.

With these two claims in hand, Plotinus reflects on the nature of activity. The activity of the absolutely simple first principle is indicated in two ways in the Platonic system. First, there is the analogy of the Good and the sun. The salient characteristic of the analogy is the "overflowing" (ἐπίρρυτον) of the sun and the Good, the first providing light and warmth, the other providing existence and essence to the Forms.[39] Second, in *Timaeus* the Demiurge is characterized as "good" for which reason he is not "grudging" (φθόνος).[40] It is his goodness that necessitates his productivity.[41] From the fact that association with the Good in any way results in production, and from the fact that that the Good itself is necessarily productive, Plotinus draws the natural conclusion that the activity of the Good is productive activity. If, though, the Good is absolutely simple and hence perfect, how can it produce anything outside of itself since this would imply that it has a goal to be achieved outside of itself by means of its production?

Plotinus' answer to this question is a model of philosophical acumen. If that which the Good produces it outside of it, then that production would immediately result in a relation between the Good and its product or products. But if the Good is related to anything, then it would have to have an illicit complexity, that is, there would have to be a distinction within it, between it and a property in virtue of which it has the relation. But there is no such property because there is not within the Good the complexity required to have a property. So, the Good is not really related to anything.[42] But this does not preclude things, i.e., its products, from being related to it. Since the Good is not related to anything, there is nowhere where it is not; counterfactually, this would again erect a relation, whether spatial or otherwise. So, the One is everywhere and everything produced by it can be said to be *within* it. But since everything produced by the Good is related to it, we can explore these relations, that is, the various properties of goodness and unity possessed in relation to the Good. Thus, for

39 *Rep.* 508b6–7.

40 *Tim.* 29e2. Cf. *Rep.* 508e5–509a5 on truth and knowledge as "good-like" but not the Good.

41 Cf. *Symp.* 212a2–7 where the achievement of the vision of the Good necessarily produces "true virtue".

42 See I 7 [54], 1.16–17; VI 8 [39], 8.12–18

example, if A has a unity greater than B, then A has the relation of being closer to the One than B.

The philosophical analysis of the activity of the absolutely simple first principle of all is the key to the systematic construction that is Platonism. With this analysis in place, Plotinus now has the means of ultimate explanation at least with respect to goodness and unity. If the One is everywhere, then it would seem that the desire for the Good possessed by everything is satisfied by "ascending" to "anywhere", which is to say, not ascending at all. But this cannot be the case at least if the systematic construction of Platonism is to have any relevance to ethics. What is needed is the articulation of another terminus of all psychic activity such that, despite the fact that the One is everywhere, it makes sense to say that one can be closer or further from it.[43]

The problem Plotinus faces is this. On the one hand, since the One cannot in principle be limited in its productive activity, there is nothing outside its causal scope. If the One went "this far" but no further, then that would indicate a limitation in it. So, everything that is caused to be, that is everything that is caused to be by the One, has this principle somehow in it. On the other hand, if evil is a turning away from the Good and vice is psychic movement in the direction of evil, how can there be such a thing as absence of Good, that is, evil?

Here is another central moment in which Plotinus, while scrupulously faithful to the text of the dialogues, needs to proceed further philosophically. In *Timaeus,* we learn that before there was a cosmos, there were three principles, namely, the real being of Forms, becoming, and space or the Receptacle of becoming.[44] Following Aristotle, Plotinus identifies the Receptacle with matter, the absence of all intelligibility. It is clear enough that this principle is independent of the Demiurge, that is, of Intellect.[45] But it is far from clear that it is or, on Plotinus' analysis, could possibly be, independent of the One.[46] For as such, the power of the One would be limited by its "opposite".

Plotinus' reasoning is as follows. The One is, as Aristotle reports, a principle of limit. The Indefinite Dyad is a principle of unlimitedness. It is by the operation of the former on the latter that intelligible being is produced. It is the One

43 See I 8 [51] 15, 3–5, where Plotinus argues that if evil is eliminated so, too, is the Good.

44 *Tim.* 51e6–52d1.

45 We may leave aside what was in antiquity an extremely controversial matter, namely, whether the imposition of order on the pre-existent chaos by the Demiurge was temporal or not.

46 That the Good was in the background but not explicitly adduced in the cosmological account was accepted as obvious on the basis of *Tim.* 48c2–6 and 53d4–7 two passages which are almost entirely ignored by modern scholars.

and the Indefinite Dyad that are the principles of the complexity necessary for there to be anything intelligible at all. The One alone could not produce anything intelligible; neither could the Indefinite Dyad. This is not a limitation on the One since it is already all things, but not as an articulated array of intelligible entities. The Indefinite Dyad is, as we shall see in a moment, the logically prior state of Intellect. The important point here is that Intellect, being cognitively identical with all the Forms, is the paradigm of all intelligibility in the cosmos.[47] So, wherever we find intelligibility we not only find the One, but also its instrument, Intellect. But a principle of indefiniteness or unlimitedness is inextricable from anything intelligible owing to its being an imitation of the paradigm in which such a principle is eternally present.[48] Matter, according to Plotinus, is just this principle of unlimitedness in things that imitate the paradigm of unlimitedness.[49] Matter is produced by the One inasmuch as everything that exists is produced by the One. But it is not directly produced by it since the only thing it produces directly is that which is "closest" to it, Intellect in its initial "phase" as the Indefinite Dyad. The One is the cause of matter via the instrumentality of Intellect and Soul.

What, then, does it mean to claim that matter is evil itself? A principle of unlimitedness is the logical terminus opposite the One and that is all it means to call it evil.[50] It is not a thing or a property; it has no intelligibility whatsoever. To say that it is a principle is not to say that it is a causal principle. Plotinus is more interested in evil as a terminus of perverted desire than as a causal principle. That is, everything and everyone desires the Good. Embodiment, however, opens up the possibility of the confusion of the real Good with that which is only apparently the Good. To turn from the real Good to the apparent Good is to take a trajectory the terminus of which is evil or unlimitedness. Since the One is the causal principle of the being of everything, this terminus is, were it to be achieved, necessarily the destruction of being. Thus does Plotinus structure an entire philosophical anthropology. Metaphysics provides the criteria by which the actions and progress of human beings can be judged. Virtue is that which contributes to unification or increase in the proximity to the One;

47 See VI 2 [43], 8.14; 21.39–40; VI 7 [38], 36.12; 39.5; VI 8 [39], 9.30–31.

48 See II 4 [12], 4.7–9; 15.17–20; II 9 [33], 8.16–29; VI 2 [43], 22.37–38. Cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* Γ4, 203a9–10.

49 See II 4 [12], 5.18–19, where Plotinus is willing to say that the Receptacle, as matter, is an imitation or image of intelligible matter, that is, of the Indefinite Dyad. This does not, however, require him to say that the Demiurge intervenes in the pre-cosmic chaos prior to his intervention when he introduces intelligibility into it.

50 See I 8 [51] 7.17–23.

vice is just the opposite. Moreover, following Plato, *grades* of virtue can be distinguished according to whether the virtue is more or less efficacious in orienting the person in the direction of the real Good.[51]

Returning to the Indefinite Dyad, Plotinus' identification of it with Intellect in its initial "phase" is based on nothing directly in the dialogues. There is, though, quite a bit of indirect guidance for Plotinus. First, since production from the One is not arbitrary, or lacunose, the first product must be that which is minimally complex. Intellect is, indeed, the least complex product generally speaking, but the Indefinite Dyad is logically more simple or less complex that the product that is Intellect, cognitively identical with the entire array of intelligible being. Since everything other than the One desires it, the Indefinite Dyad desires it. And since there is nothing to prevent it from achieving its desire, it does so, not by reabsorbing back into the One, so to speak, but by thinking all that the One is virtually, that is, by thinking all that is intelligible.

Intellect as the Indefinite Dyad is that which makes it possible for there to be eternally distinct Forms.[52] The systematizing impetus in this claim is patent. According to Plato, the Demiurge is eternally contemplating all the Forms. Plato leaves open the explanation of how the immaterial intelligible entities can be differentiated such that they can provide a foundation for eternal or necessary truths. Aristotle's testimony is that the One and the Indefinite Dyad are the principles underlying the Forms or, to use the alternative metaphor, those principles to which the Forms are reduced. So, acknowledging the accuracy of Aristotle's testimony, and at the same time trying to integrate the Idea of the Good into a system that includes Intellect and Forms, Plotinus hypothesizes primal Intellect as the intelligible matter for the array of Forms. That Intellect thinks these Forms means that it is cognitively identical with them. That is, what Intellect is is a one-many. It is the material basis for the multiplicity of Forms.

Remarkably, Plotinus thinks that it is also his task to integrate into this system what Plato in *Sophist* calls "the greatest kinds" (τὰ μέγιστα γένη).[53] These are: Being, Identity, Difference, Motion, and Rest. Plotinus' interpretation of the greatest kinds is best considered after reflecting on the contemporary interpretations of this long passage in *Sophist*. These range mostly from the view that the five greatest kinds are not really intended by Plato to have a

51 See I 2 [9] and Gerson (2013), 293–9, on the systematization of gradations of virtue based principally on *Phd.* and *Rep*. See below pp. 334–5.

52 See II 4 [12], 1.14–18, citing Aristotle's testimony on intelligible matter and the Indefinite Dyad. Intellect as Indefinite Dyad is "intelligible matter" for the Forms. Also, II 4, 4.15–20.

53 *Sph.* 254b7ff.

superordinate status to the view that postulation of greatest kinds, that is, primary Forms is gibberish, to the view that because this postulation is obviously gibberish the dialogue itself must be spurious.[54] By contrast, Plotinus' question is how to understand the greatest kinds within the framework of the system of the three natures.

Plotinus takes the five greatest kinds as the fundamental properties of Intellect which is cognitively identical with the Forms.[55] Among the many problems with making sense of Being as a genus is that the other greatest kinds are co-ordinated with this genus instead of subordinate to it. Here is how Plotinus addresses this problem.

> Now, there are many species of Being, and there is a genus of Being. But Motion is not classed under Being nor over Being, but is alongside Being. It is found in Being but not as inhering in a subject. For it is an activity of Being and neither is without the other except in our conception of them. And the two natures are one. For Being is in actuality not in potency.[56]

The key to Plotinus' understanding of the matter is the claim that Motion and Being are not without the other except in our conception of them. We can conceive of something having being without being in motion, even the motion of Intellect. We can even conceive of something in motion, that is, matter, that is bereft of being. What the intelligible realm is supposed to do, according to Plotinus' understanding of Platonism, is explain, among other things, the diminished intelligibility of things of which we have conceptions; what, for

54 Accordingly, there are those who take Plotinus' interpretation to be significantly distortive. See Brisson (1997) and Santa Cruz (1997).

55 At II 6 [17], 1.1–8, where the suggestion seems to be that the intelligible matter is οὐσία itself (as opposed to τὸ ὄν, Being, one of the greatest kinds), the "generic" intelligible matter for the greatest kinds. But οὐσία is just what Intellect is. See V 3 [49], 11.14, V 9 [5], 8.2. So, one way of characterizing Intellect is as "substance" (οὐσία), the "matter" of which is Intellect in the first phase of its generation (= Indefinite Dyad) and Intellect as "enformed" by the entire array of Forms.

56 See VI 2 [43], 7.16–20: Ὄντος μὲν δὴ εἴδη πολλὰ καὶ γένος· κίνησις δὲ οὔτε ὑπὸ τὸ ὂν τακτέα οὔτ᾽ ἐπὶ τῷ ὄντι, ἀλλὰ μετὰ τοῦ ὄντος, εὑρεθεῖσα ἐν αὐτῷ οὐχ ὡς ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ· ἐνέργεια γὰρ αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐδέτερον ἄνευ τοῦ ἑτέρου ἢ ἐπινοίᾳ, καὶ αἱ δύο φύσεις μία· καὶ γὰρ ἐνεργείᾳ τὸ ὄν, οὐ δυνάμει. See Hadot (1960a), 111: "Les genres de l'être du *Sophiste* (254–5): être, movement, repos, identité, et altérité, apparaissent comme les different aspects souls lesquels notre intelligence morcelante saisit la vue unique de l'intelligence. Mais c'est bien parce que la réalité intelligible est doué de vie et de pensée que cette multiplicité de points de vue est possible."

example, is the nature of the being without motion? In our conceptions, we can distinguish the activity of Intellect from the array of essences with which it is actually cognitively identical. And so we can conceive of the images of intelligibility here below without conceiving of them as thinking, though if Intellect were not eternally thinking them, they would not be distinguishable, even in thought.[57]

In *Sophist,* we learn that the kinds Motion and Rest are contrary, that Being "blends" with each of these, but they do not blend with each other.[58] Plotinus acknowledges these distinctions.[59] But the question that Plotinus asks and those who believe that Plotinus is deviating from Plato neglect to ask is what is the ontological claim being made by one who says that two of the kinds (Motion and Rest) are unmixed with each other (ἀμείκτω πρὸς ἀλλήλω)? The claim is not that the two kinds are distinct; this is also true for Being, which is distinct from Motion and Rest, but nevertheless blends with each. It is certainly true that from the absence of blending we can deduce that if something is at rest, then in the respect that it is at rest, it is not in motion, and vice versa. But this is only to avoid the question, since this follows *because* of the absence of blending of the kinds; it does not constitute that absence of blending. If this were not so, then the entire point of separating Forms in order for them to be explanatory entities would be lost.

It is precisely here that the rationale for claiming that Intellect is a one-many becomes especially perspicuous. The oneness of Intellect is the oneness of a multiplicity. So, Being is necessarily complex.[60] This makes sense only if the first principle of all is, as Plato says, above Being (τὸ ὄν). The multiplicity is manifested among the objects of Intellect's thinking and in the duality of

57 See Silverman (2002), 294: "They are the greatest kinds also because they are required for metaphysical (and all other types of) inquiry and because they allow the postulated Forms and particulars to play the sorts of roles required of them by Plato's special metaphysical theory. They are formal conditions on Formhood and, therefore, derivatively apply to particulars, souls, and everything else in a fashion appropriate to each […]."

58 See *Sph.* 252d6–20; 254d4–10. At 256b6 the Eleatic Stranger says that there is nothing outrageous if in fact motion did partake of rest in some way and therefore was stable. Heindorf conjectured a lacuna after this claim, though the reply by Theaetetus is "absolutely correct, so long as we agree that some kinds blend and some do not". Heindorf filled the lacuna with words to the effect that motion does not partake of rest at all, though it does partake of identity and difference. Thus, according to Heindorf, Theaetetus' reply does not confirm that motion does partake of rest in some way. But this elaborate reversal of the text as received is not necessary on Plotinus' interpretation.

59 See VI 2 [43], 7.31–32; 8.44.

60 See V 3 [49], 13.25: τὸ γὰρ ὂν πολύ ἐστιν. Also, II 4 [112] 4, 14–15: πολλὰ ὂν ἀμέριστόν ἐστι.

Intellect and these objects of thinking. As objects of thinking, Being, which we may understand here as essence, is a genus, the genus of all that which is intelligible. The duality entails difference; the oneness entails identity. The activity of Intellect is its intellectual motion. Rest is the one-many as the static array of Forms. So, it can be true that Motion and Rest do not "mix"; otherwise, there would not be a multiplicity in Intellect. And it can be true that Being mixes with each, because the Being that Intellect is is the Being of the one-many.[61]

An interpretation of the greatest kinds that eschews systematization altogether would be more cogent than one which accepts systematization while at the same time rejecting Plotinus' account. This is evident from the literature merely by inspection.

In this light of his analysis of the one-many that is Intellect and Being, Plotinus appears to move even further from the explicit words of Plato when he argues that we possess undescended intellects.

> How, then, since the intelligible is separate, does the soul enter the body? It is like this: the part of it that is only intellect is impassive remaining always among the intelligibles having and an intellectual life only in the intelligible world – for it has no impulse or desire – while that which acquires desire, following immediately on that intellect, by the addition of desire in a way extends further and desires to produce order according to what it saw in intellect, as if being pregnant by the intelligibles and laboring to give birth, and is eager to make and construct the world.[62]

The point of insisting on the fact that the real identity of each individual human being is with an intellect that is eternally contemplating Forms *now* is entirely epistemological. If we did not have undescended intellects, then

61 The integration of this account of the greatest kinds into the interpretation of the "second nature" in the second hypothesis of *Parm.* is outside the scope of this paper. Suffice to say, if those deductions amount to an analysis of the one-many "logically", then the systematic construct will arise out of that matrix.

62 IV 7 [2], 13.1–8: Πῶς οὖν τοῦ νοητοῦ χωριστοῦ ὄντος ἥδε εἰς σῶμα ἔρχεται; Ὅτι, ὅσος μὲν νοῦς μόνος, ἀπαθὴς ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς ζωὴν μόνον νοερὰν ἔχων ἐκεῖ ἀεὶ μένει – οὐ γὰρ ἔνι ὁρμὴ οὐδ᾽ ὄρεξις – ὃ δ᾽ ἂν ὄρεξιν προσλάβῃ ἐφεξῆς ἐκείνῳ τῷ νῷ ὄν, τῇ προσθήκῃ τῆς ὀρέξεως οἷον πρόεισιν ἤδη ἐπιπλέον καὶ κοσμεῖν ὀρεγόμενον καθὰ ἐν νῷ εἶδεν, ὥσπερ κυοῦν ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν καὶ ὠδῖνον γεννῆσαι, ποιεῖν σπεύδει καὶ δημιουργεῖ. Cf. IV 8 [6], 8 where Plotinus acknowledges that his view is not shared by others, that is, by other interpreters of Plato. Indeed, Porphyry recounts that he himself rejected this view until Plotinus persuaded him of it. Cf. See IV 4 [28],7.13; VI 7 [38], 5.26–29; VI 8 [39], 6.41–43.

intellection or thinking would not be possible for us. Since it obviously is possible, we must have such intellects. Plato, of course, speaks frequently about the existence of souls prior to embodiment and after embodiment, and, indeed, *re-embodiment* as a punishment for sins committed during previous embodiments. But nowhere does he suggest that our intellects are undescended even if we suppose that the disembodied soul is solely an intellect. Plotinus, however, thinks this is what the Platonist must say and, indeed, what Plato does say, albeit "discreetly" (ἠρέμα).[63] Why does Plotinus insist on this very unusual claim?[64]

Given that being and intellect are two sides of the same coin, so to speak, if we are separated from intellect, our thinking will have to be in terms of images or, more broadly, representations of being. We will not be cognitively identical with being itself. Plotinus recognizes that much of our cognition is representational, for example, sense-perception and belief. But these would not be for us – as in fact they are – rational activities unless they were founded on our cognition of Forms. For example, we could not have the rational belief that this man is pale unless we understood what a man is and what paleness is. But such understanding cannot amount to another type of representation. Ultimately, there must be non-representational cognition if there is to be rational representation of any sort. The non-representational cognition – the cognitive identity of our intellects and real being – has to be somehow accessible to us for us to engage in any rational embodied cognition. Broadly speaking, the accessibility is possible because our individual souls are rational projections of the hypostasis Soul which is itself a rational projection of Intellect. So, as Plotinus puts it, the Forms operate in us as "laws" (νόμοι), which are images of intelligible reality.[65] The laws themselves would not be sufficient unless they were images of what we really are, intellectual *loci* of intelligible being.

For Plotinus, the great drama of human life is not primarily focused on whether or not we can attain knowledge of Forms, but on whether or not we can "re-connect" with our own true identities as *loci* of Forms. To attain this identity is perforce to know Forms. Within the framework of the "three

63 See IV 8 [6], 4.35. Plotinus here refers to the generation of souls by the Demiurge in *Tim.* 41d5–8. Our souls are composed of two kinds of Being, Identity, and Difference, one eternal and one "dispersed" or sensible. Plotinus understands the former to refer obliquely to our undescended intellects.

64 This view is rejected by virtually all later Platonists. See, e.g, Proclus, *ET* § 211.1–2; *In Parm.* 948.12–30 and on Proclus' report of Iamblichus as also rejecting this view, *In Tim.* III 334.10–14. See Szlezák (1979), ch.4.

65 See V 3 [49], 4.2.

natures", human life is viewed as profoundly alienated from eternal reality. The argument for the undescended intellect entails that this alienation is a self-alienation. Accordingly, Plotinus understands as a central Platonic text *Theaetetus* 176a5–c5. There, Socrates exhorts his interlocutors to "flee from here" where such flight (φυγή) "is assimilation to the divine as much as is possible" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν). This assimilation amounts to the practice of virtue.[66]

Given the above, Plotinus obviously takes the assimilation to be a process of self-identification, alternatively understood as "purification" (κάθαρσις).[67] Self-identification is the obverse of separation from the bodily, not via mortification of the flesh but by the practice of philosophy.[68] What is initially puzzling for any interpreter is that Plato has assimilation to the divine consist in the practice of virtue "with wisdom". The practice of virtue alone or without wisdom is not sufficient, which is of course not to say that it is a bad thing.[69] It is wisdom that transforms human beings into the intellects that they really are already. The practice that achieves wisdom, namely, philosophy, makes us progressively ill at ease in bodies and progressively more at ease in the intelligible realm. To interpret Plato otherwise is to risk viewing our rewards and punishments for lives lived here below in decidedly anachronistic terms. I mean that on this view the virtuous life – whether it includes philosophy or not – is rewarded in the way that a parent rewards a child. And this can only be if we endow the intelligible realm with real parents or with persons caring for us. Plotinus' rejection of the view can be otherwise represented as his rejection of a literal interpretation of Plato's eschatological myths.

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66 It is instructive to read alongside Plotinus' interpretation of this passage within the systematic framework of Platonism contemporary efforts either to discount or to completely ignore the passage. What was for Plotinus and Platonists after him perhaps the main emblem of Platonism is for contemporary scholars useless for shedding any insight on the dialogues much less on Platonism itself. See Irwin (1977) and (1995) for nearly 800 pages of analysis of Plato's ethics which nowhere discuss the meaning and significance of "assimilation to the divine".

67 See *Phd.* 68b8–c3 along with I 2 [19], 1.1–10, II 3 [52], 9.19–24, III 6 [26], 5.13–15, V 1 [10], 10.24–32.

68 See the treatise "On Dialectic", I 3 [20], 1.1ff where philosophical dialectic is explicitly the technique for purification and hence for assimilation to the divine.

69 At *Rep.* 619b7–d1 we learn of a man who, having lived a virtuous life is given the opportunity to choose his next life. Incredibly, he chooses the life of a tyrant. And Plato's explanation for this is that 'shared in virtue by habit without philosophy' (ἔθει ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας ἀρετῆς μετειληφότα). Cf. 518d11 where it is 'wisdom' (φρόνησις) that is the term used.

If there is virtue "with and without philosophy", then it is reasonable to interpret Plato as implicitly endorsing *grades* of virtue.[70] The impact of this interpretation on later Platonism, no doubt via Porphyry's thematization of it in his *Sentences*, is immense. The "popular and political virtue" (τὴν δημοτικὴν καὶ πολιτικὴν ἀρετήν) of *Phaedo* is not vice.[71] But it is not philosophical virtue either. It is, according to Plotinus, the social virtue of a human being. We are not, however, primarily human beings. We are intellects. The valorization of human virtue without the recognition of this truth is not the solution to any important philosophical problem; it is the problem itself. The very idea of grades of virtue, already implicit for Plotinus in the distinction between the lower and higher mysteries of *Symposium*, is unintelligible apart from the metaphysical framework within which it is set. Taking Plato seriously, Plotinus assumes that he does not aim to say unintelligible things or that he has nothing particular in mind when he makes extraordinary claims such as the exhortation to assimilation to the divine in *Theaetetus*. On the contrary, with the framework in place, all or most of what Plato does say becomes readily intelligible.

If we possessed more than a handful of fragments of the works of the perhaps 100–200 self-declared Platonic philosophers of the period known unhelpfully as "Middle Platonism", we would perhaps see Plotinus' distinctive contribution to Platonism more clearly. For after Plotinus, and despite disagreement over details, Platonists generally followed in his path. It is not that Plotinus was unique as a systematizer of Platonism. This project was well under way in the Old Academy. It is that Plotinus strove – with what I claim is considerable success – to situate within that systematic framework virtually everything Plato says of consequence. That meant that the system is bigger, so to speak, than its concrete applications, especially in the dialogues, but also in oral teachings.

70 See especially I 2 [19], the treatise "On Virtue".

71 See *Phd.* 82a10–b3.

CHAPTER 17

Porphyry

Michael Chase

I Introduction

As the disciple and editor of Plotinus, Porphyry naturally took a deep interest in Plato. Indeed, the fact that, unlike Plotinus, he wrote commentaries on at least some of Plato's dialogues, suggests that his approach to Plato was more systematic, and perhaps even "scholastic", especially if, as I suggest below, we can see in Porphyry the birth of the establishment of a "reading order" for Plato's dialogues, which was to be developed in later Neoplatonism. Another prominent feature of Porphyry's work on Plato, and another point which differentiates him from Plotinus, was his concern for the harmonization of Plato and Aristotle: he seems to have written at least one, and perhaps two works to this subject.[1] Finally, Porphyry's exegesis of Plato was characterized by his adaptation and transformation of Middle Platonic material.

The present contribution will focus on a few subjects that seem to have particularly attracted Porphyry's attention in his interpretation of Plato. These include the themes, all closely interrelated, of creation, free will and providence.

Porphyry's works – we know of at least 55 titles – have been transmitted in a highly fragmented state, and in many cases we are not even sure whether the titles attributed to him by ancient sources were autonomous treatises, parts of larger works, or perhaps represent mere inferences and assumptions by later authors, based on isolated passages or quotations.[2] As far as individual Platonic dialogues are concerned, we have little evidence for Porphyry's interest in the so-called early dialogues. With varying degrees of persuasiveness, ancient sources attribute to Porphyry commentaries on the *Cratylus*, *Sophist*, *Philebus*, *Phaedo*, *Parmenides*, *Timaeus*, and *Republic*. None of these commentaries have survived in their entirety, and the last three works are the only ones of which we have substantial fragments. The case of the *Parmenides* commentary is controversial: Pierre Hadot's attribution to Porphyry of the fragments of an

1 Porphyry, *Fragmenta*, 29–30. Smith (ed.) (1993). On the tendency to harmonization, see Karamanolis, (2006) and Hadot (2015).

2 For the latest list of Porphyry's works, see Goulet (2012), 1300–11. For discussion, see Johnson (2013), 21–49.

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anonymous commentary on the *Parmenides* 137c–143a, preserved in a Turin palimpsest that was destroyed in 1904, has not been accepted by all scholars,[3] so I will leave it out of consideration here.

One of the main sources for our knowledge of Porphyry's attitude toward Plato is the extant fragments of his commentary on the *Timaeus*,[4] which is the most extensively preserved of his Platonic commentaries. Apart from his commentaries, however, Porphyry's many works contain many passages that deal with Platonic texts and doctrines. By way of illustration, therefore, I will also discuss the interpretation of the Myth of Er that occurs in Porphyry's fragmentarily preserved work *On what is up to us*.[5]

An interesting example of Porphyry's use of a variety of Platonic dialogues can be found in what remains of his work *On the "Know Thyself"*.[6] The extant fragments begin with a discussion self-control as self-knowledge, apparently based on the *Charmides* (164d–169c), and concluding that the Delphic oracle enjoins upon us to know our intellect (*nous*), which is the cause of intelligence. The god commands us to know ourselves, not for the sake of doing philosophy, but in order to achieve wisdom, which brings with it happiness, which is the goal for which we practice philosophy.

Porphyry then takes up the three-fold division of ignorance in the *Philebus* (48 ff.). Yet it is probably the *First Alcibiades,* with its identification of self-knowledge with temperance (133c), that constitutes the main background of his thought here, providing him with his distinction between what is us (*nous* or the perfect human being), what is ours (the body), and what pertains to what is ours (external goods). Our goal must be to come to know the immortal true inner man (*entos anthrôpos*, cf. *Republic* IX 598a7), of whom the outer man is a mere image, but the knowledge of all three levels is essential. Although only a few fragments of Porphyry's *On the Know Thyself* survive, it originally consisted in at least four volumes, and is likely to have been quite influential on subsequent work, not only preparing the way for subsequent pagan commentaries on the *Alcibiades*[7] but also, with its linkage between the notion of the human being as a small world through whom the greater world can be known and the importance of self-knowledge, providing a source of

3 See the discussion in Chase (2012b), 1349–76, esp. 1358–71.

4 Sodano (ed.) (1964).

5 Porphyry, *Fragmenta* 268–71. Smith (ed.) (1993) = Stobaeus, *Anthology*, II, 8, 39–42. See also the new an English translation of Wilberding (trans.) (2011).

6 Porphyry, *Fragmenta* 273–5. Smith (ed.) (1993). On this work cf. Pépin (1971) 102–104; Courcelle (1974–75), 87–91; Renaud & Tarrant (2015), 161–4.

7 Renaud & Tarrant (2015), 164.

inspiration for such Church Fathers as Ambrose,[8] Augustine[9] and Basil of Casarea.[10]

II Porphyry on Substance

One tool Porphyry chose to argue for this doctrine, although it predated him, was characteristic of his methodology throughout his philosophy. Apparent conflicts between two texts or series of texts were to be defused by distinguishing between several different meanings of a word, and then arguing that Plato, for instance, was referring to one meaning, and Aristotle to another.

One of the main stumbling-blocks to the harmonization of Plato and Aristotle was at the same time a source of difficulty within Aristotle's philosophy itself: his conception of "substance" (*ousia*). Aristotle's assertion in the *Categories*[11] that in its primary sense, "substance" designates concrete, sensible items such as horses and human beings seemed to conflict both with his own accounts of substance in the *Metaphysics*[12] and elsewhere and with the entire edifice of Plato's thought, which, of course, reserved the status of substance *par excellence* for the intelligible Forms. Porphyry's solution, as set forth in his extant Commentary on the *Categories*,[13] is to claim that when Aristotle designates sensible objects as "first substances" (*prôtai ousiai*), what he really means is that simple words, which Porphyry has established are the goal (*skopos*) or subject matter of the *Categories*, were first (*prôtôs*) imposed upon sensible objects, which were the first things human beings encountered. Only later did they give names to things, such as genera and species, which are primary by nature but secondary with regard to sensation. In the context of Aristotle's treatise on the *Categories*, therefore, sensible substances are to be treated as primary. Yet this priority, explained by historical and methodological considerations, applies only to the *Categories*, a treatise which Aristotle had designed for philosophical beginners and therefore kept deliberately simple and free of metaphysical considerations. The key notion in Porphyry's solution is thus a distinction between the meanings of the word "primary": for Aristotle in

8 Cf. Dörrie (1976), 474–90.

9 Augustine, *De Trin.* X, 8.11–9.12; XIV, 5.7 ff. Cf. Theiler (1966), 220–23.

10 *In illud: attende sibi ipsi*. Cf. Courcelle (1974–75), vol. I, 111.

11 Aristotle, *Categories* 5, 2a11–14. Cf. *Ibid.* 2a14–15; 17–19, where "human being" and "horse" – i.e., universals – are relegated to the status of "secondary substances".

12 For instance, *Metaph.* M 1084b5.

13 Porphyry, *In Cat.* 91.19–27 Busse = 254–6 Bodéüs (2008).

the *Categories*, sensible objects are primary "for us", while – as Plato would agree – universals are primary "in themselves" or "by nature".

Contrary to appearances, therefore, and also contrary to the view of Plotinus in *Ennead* VI 1–3,[14] Aristotle did not contradict Plato by attributing ontological priority to sensible substances. Their apparent disagreement merely stems from a conscious decision on Aristotle's part to restrict his attention to the sensible world, as is fitting for a work intended for beginners. Thanks to Porphyry's interpretative stance, Aristotle's entire edifice of logic, ethics, physics, and psychology could henceforth be integrated within Neoplatonism as a reliable guide to understanding the sensible world, while knowledge of the intelligible world was to be derived from Plato. In the fully developed Neoplatonic study curriculum or reading order (*taxis tês anagnôseôs*), the study of Aristotle therefore preceded the study of a selection of Plato's dialogues, culminating in the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*. Although Porphyry may not have fully elaborated this reading order,[15] his method of harmonizing Plato and Aristotle was a necessary precondition for it.

III Porphyry on Creation in the *Timaeus*

At least from the first century BCE, the *Timaeus* was the most important dialogue in Hellenistic exegesis. Among its more problematic passages, in the eyes of its exegetes, was its apparent description of the process of the world's creation by a mysterious figure, the Demiurge. According to Plato, this figure confronts a pre-existing entity described as the *khôra*, a kind of Receptacle in which the traces of the elements move in a chaotic, disorderly way. The Demiurge's creation of the world consists in his imposing order on this chaos, leading to the establishment of the ordered universe as we know it (Greek *kosmos*).[16]

One of the major difficulties with this account was that it seemed to affirm a temporal beginning for the universe, a view that went against both previous and subsequent Greek views, especially that of Aristotle, which maintained that the universe is eternal.[17] Porphyry's solution to this problem exhibits

14 I concur with such interpreters as Chiaradonna (2004), 137–54, that Plotinus' attitude to Aristotle's categories is critical, not to say dismissive. For a different view, see de Haas (2001), 492–526.

15 On this order, see I. Hadot (1987a), 99–122 and Mansfeld (1994).

16 Plato, *Tim.* 29d–30c.

17 More precisely, later Greek philosophers tended to interpret the Presocratics as claiming that the world periodically arises from and dissolves back into some pre-existing element, and that this process continues eternally.

another characteristic of his method of interpreting not only Plato, but the history of Greek philosophy in general. He took up a doctrine devised by one of his Middle Platonic predecessors, revised it slightly, and used it to promote the doctrine of the harmony between Plato and Aristotle.

Everything turned, in this debate, on the question of what Plato meant by saying that the world was "generated" (Greek *genêton*/*gegonen,* cf. *Timaeus* 28b7). The Middle Platonist Taurus had distinguished four meanings of the Greek word "generated" (*genêton*): (1) what is not generated but has the same genus as generated things; (2) what is not actually compound but can be broken down into its component parts; (3) what is always in the process of becoming; (4) what derives its being from elsewhere. Porphyry now added three more: (5) what is subject to generation even though it has never actually been generated (this amounts to being made up of matter and form); (6) what derives its existence from a process of becoming; and (7) what begins to exist at a particular point after not having existed previously. As far as Plato's meaning is concerned, Porphyry rules out meaning (7) and declares his preference for meanings (4) and (5).[18]

Porphyry's view is that, contrary to what the text of the *Timaeus* seems to imply, Plato did not wish to claim that the world was generated at a specific moment in time after not having existed previously (meaning no. 7). Instead, the world was generated in the sense that it derived its being from elsewhere (the Demiurge and the intelligible forms, or the Paradigm; = meaning 4), and/or that it is made up of matter and form (meaning 5). Porphyry's interpretation amounts, then, to denying that Plato's account of creation is to be understood literally: instead, it was merely for the sake of illustration or for pedagogical purposes.[19] The sense in which the Demiurge and the intelligible Model are prior to the sensible world is not chronological, but causal (*kat'aitian*) and ontological.[20] Anticipating Proclus' influential doctrine, Porphyry[21] maintains that the Demiurge generates things by his very being (*autôi tôi einai*), and since the Demiurge is eternal, this entails that his act of creation is eternal.

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18 Porphryry, *In Tim.* frr. 36–37 Sodano = Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi* VI.8, 148.7–15 Rabe. On this text, see Baltes (1976).

19 The idea that *Tim.* creation passage was merely "for the sake of instruction" (*didaskalias heneken*) had already been advanced by Plato's immediate successors in the Academy; cf. Aristotle, *De caelo*, 280a.

20 An interpretation already formulated by Plotinus (*Enn.* II 4 [12], 5, 25 ff.; IV 3 [27] 8, 30 ff.; V 2 [11], 1, 5 ff.; V 6 [24], 5, 5 ff.).

21 Porphyry, *In Tim.* fr. 51 Sodano = Proclus, *In Tim.* I 395.10 ff.

Thus, in his interpretation of the *Timaeus* passage on the creation of the world, Porphyry elaborates upon a Middle Platonic doctrine which already made use of the favourite Neoplatonic technique of distinguishing between various meanings of a word, in order both to save the surface meaning of Plato's text and render it compatible with both Aristotelian and Neoplatonic doctrines.

IV Porphyry on Matter and Evil

As we have seen, the creation narrative of Plato's *Timaeus* spoke of an initial stage in which the mysterious *khôra,* identified by subsequent interpreters with matter, was agitated by the traces (*ikhnê*) of the elements, which caused it to move in a disorderly way. But while some Middle Platonists interpreted this passage to imply the existence of an eternal evil and irrational World Soul, which they identified with matter, Porphyry argued that what the Demiurge "takes up" is not matter but bodies, already constituted by the Demiurge out of form and matter.[22]

One cannot conclude, argues Porphyry, from matter's eternal disorderly motion to its possession of an evil and eternal soul. Matter is itself inanimate, neither mobile nor immobile; bereft of qualities, it is the mere capacity for form. Only when God makes it into a body by adding qualities to it does it come to be in motion or at rest. What causes motion are the bodies or traces of the elements, whose natural movements and tendencies[23] matter, in its weakness, is unable to resist.[24]

According to Porphyry, Plato distinguishes between several stages in the process of creation: the creation of matter, its corporealization or formation into bodies, and the organization of bodies to form a *kosmos*. Yet although these stages can be distinguished in thought, they in fact succeed one another in a way that can be considered, depending on one's viewpoint, as eternal or simultaneous.[25] If Plato presents the Demiurge as creating the world over a period of time, this is, once again, merely for pedagogical purposes. Nevertheless,

22 Porphyry, *In Tim.* fr. 47 Sodano = Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi* 164.13 ff. Rabe. Cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.* § 301.

23 As Porphyry explains (fr. 48 Sodano), bodies move naturally, because they are physical, and nature (*phusis*) is the principle of rest and motion. Yet they move in a disorderly way before receiving order from God, like a chariot without a driver or a ship without a helmsman.

24 Calcidius, *In Tim.* § 352.

25 Proclus, *In Tim.* II 102.6 ff.: Ὁ μὲν θεὸς ἀθρόως πάντα καὶ διαιωνίως παράγει.

Porphyry adds, all the elements out of which bodies derive are generated from god (ὡς ἐξ ὧν συνέστηκεν τὰ σώματα γεννηθέντων ἀπὸ θεοῦ).[26]

Porphyry thus discarded the Middle Platonic view that matter was an evil principle, co-eternal with the Demiurge. Instead, he went on to develop two views that became canonical in subsequent Neoplatonism: that evil is a mere epiphenomenon, and that matter is created by the First Principle.

Opposing the Middle Platonist belief in an eternal and evil World Soul, Porphyry argues that evil cannot be eternal. Evil is the mere privation of good, whereas all that exists is good *qua* endowed with form. Evil is not a being (*to on*), but a mere *parupostasis*, a subsidiary or parasitical existence. Again, whereas the Middle Platonists argued that the Demiurge required an independently existent matter in order to create the world, Porphyry affirms that the Paradigm, or the Demiurge's Intellect, creates all the matter necessary for the intelligible world, while the cosmos itself provides the matter required to produce the entities of the sensible world.[27]

As far as the creation of matter is concerned, Porphyry may well have agreed, to some extent, with the views of the Neo-Pythagorean Moderatus of Gades, whom he cited in his lost treatise *On Matter*.[28] In the doctrine of Moderatus, we have a process by which a divine metaphysical principle strips itself of its qualities and forms to produce formless quantity. By a process that is unfortunately hard to reconstruct, this quantity produces a shadow or reflection of itself that can also be called quantity: the matter of the sensible world. This matter *seems* to be evil, although the question of whether it actually *is* evil or not is left open.

Some Porphyrian texts on matter come close to the Christian view of *creatio ex nihilo*. For Porphyry, the demiurgic *logos* can produce all things without any need for matter.[29] If Plato calls the Demiurge "Father and maker",[30] says

26 Porphyry's views on these subjects are very close to those of Hierocles, the student of Plutarch of Alexandria, on the demiurge and his way of creating the world without pre-existing matter, for all eternity and by his being alone; cf. Hadot (2004), 15–36. This lends some credence to W. Theiler's view that these doctrines may go back to Ammonius Saccas.

27 Porphyry, *In Tim*. fr. 55, 41.19–20 Sodano.

28 Porphyry, *On Matter*, ap. Simplicium, *In Phys*. 230.24–231.5 Diels.

29 Porphyry ap. Proclus, *In Tim.* I 396.20 ff. = fr. 51 Sodano: "… the demiurgic logos is able to bring all things into existence, since it has no need at all of matter for its existence" (ὁ δημιουργικὸς λόγος τὰ πάντα παράγειν δύναται διὰ τὸ *μηδὲν εἰς τὸ εἶναι τῆς ὕλης δεηθείς*).

30 Porphyry, *In Tim*. fr. 40 Sodano = Proclus, *In Tim*. I 300.1–8.

Porphyry, it is because a father (*patêr*) is one who generates the whole from himself (πατὴρ μέν ἐστιν ὁ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ γεννῶν τὸ ὅλον), like Ariston generated Plato, while a maker (*poiêtês*) is like a house-builder who does not himself generate the matter he uses (ὡς οὐκ αὐτὸς τὴν ὕλην γεννῶν). Given that Plato calls the Demiurge both "Father" and "Maker", he must, according to Porphyry, have believed that the Demiurge creates matter.

Thus, Porphyry envisaged the Demiurge's creative activity as taking place both instantaneously and eternally, by virtue of his thinking. Since his thinking is his being, however, this is equivalent to saying that the Demiurge creates by virtue of his being alone:

> Fourth and next is the section of [Porphyry's] arguments in which he shows that the divine Intellect practises a mode of creation (*dêmiourgia*) [that takes place] by mere being (*autôi tôi einai*), and establishes [this] by a number of arguments. Even artisans [he says] need tools for their activity [only] because they do not have mastery over all [their] material (*hulê*). They show this themselves by using these tools to get [their] material ready for use (*euergos*) by drilling, planing, or turning it, all of which [operations] do not add form, but [merely] eliminate the unreadiness of the [material which is] to receive the form. The actual rational formula (*logos*) [of the work], on the other hand, supervenes upon (*paraginesthai*) the substrate (*hupokeimenon*) timelessly (*akhronôs*) from the art, once all obstacles have been removed. And if there were no obstacle in the case of [artisans] either, they [too] would add the form to the matter instantaneously (*athroôs*) and have absolutely no need of tools (...) If, then, human arts and the imaginations of individual [human] souls and the operations of demons achieve such results, is it surprising that *the Demiurge should bring perceptible* [*reality*] *into existence just by thinking* (*autôi tôi noein*) the universe, generating the material immaterially and the tangible intangibly, and partlessly extending the extended? Nor should we be surprised if something which is is incorporeal and unextended should be able to cause the existence of the universe. If it is the case that human semen, which is so small in bulk yet contains within itself all of the [seminal] reasons, gives rise to so many differences (...) it will certainly be much more the case that *the demiurgic reason is able to bring all things into existence, since it has no need at all of matter for its existence*, as has [the reason] associated with the semen. For this latter is not outside of matter, whereas the creator (*hypostatês*) of all things is eternally fixed

> in himself, and has brought all things into existence out of his abiding (*menein*) self.[31]

According to Porphyry, then, the Demiurge creates by his very being (*autôi tôi einai*) or thinking (*autôi tôi noein*). Human craftsmen require tools[32] only because they lack complete mastery over the matter they use: once they have used these tools to remove the obstacles in their material, the *logos* or form appears atemporally in the product of their work. Absent such obstacles, humans would be able to impose form on their matter instantaneously (*athroôs*). From the examples of human emotions and demonic activity, which can cause effects on material bodies, Porphyry derives an argument *a fortiori*: since the Demiurge is so far superior to humans or to demons, he is much more able to bring the universe into existence by mere thought (αὐτῷ τῷ νοεῖν), since unlike his inferior imitators he has no need of a pre-existent matter, but produces all things out of himself while remaining at rest.

For Porphyry,[33] as we saw, it is the model itself (*paradeigma*) – i.e., the intelligible Living Being of the *Timaeus* – that brings into existence all the (intelligible) matter it needs,[34] while the cosmos (i.e. the four elements) provides all the matter needed for the instantiations of a Platonic Form like Man Himself.

According to a quotation preserved by Aeneas of Gaza, Porphyry rejected as impious the Middle Platonic belief that matter is an ungenerated principle. Instead, matter is generated or has come into being, as Porphyry claimed, citing the *Chaldaean Oracles* (cf. fr. 34 Des Places). If matter is generated by the Father, however, it is not generated in time (*akhronon*), but causally,[35] in that the Father bestows existence upon it throughout all perpetuity.

On the basis of these and other testimonies, we can hazard the following reconstruction of Porphyry's cosmogonical scheme, which he derived primarily

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31 Porphyry, *In Tim.* fr. 51 Sodano = Proclus, *In Tim.* I 395.10–396.26, translation Runia–Share (modified).

32 Cf. the Arabic apocryphon *Theology of Aristotle* (which may derive in part from Porphyry's lost commentaries on the *Enneads* of Plotinus) X, 189, 162.14 ff. Badawi (translation Lewis): "… when craftsmen wish to fashion a thing (…) when they work they work with their hands and other instruments whereas when the Creator wishes to make something (…) He does not need any instrument in the origination of things (*fī-ibdāʿ l-ašyāʾ*) because he is the cause of instruments, it being he that originated them".

33 Proclus, *In Tim.* I 440.3 = Porphyry, *In Tim.* fr. 55 Sodano.

34 The same doctrine is found in Calcidius; cf. Van Winden (1959), 65.

35 Matter is *aitiatên,* a term which reminds us of Porphyry's doctrine that the world as a whole is generated not in time (*kata khronon*) but in a causal sense (*kat'aitian*).

from his interpretation of Plato. First the Demiurge, or more precisely the divine paradigm that is his intellect, produces matter, which he then organizes by means of the elementary geometrical figures described at *Timaeus* 53c. This "corporealization" of matter results in the coming-into-existence of bodies, and it is these bodies, rather than matter, which, at *Timaeus* 30a, the Demiurge sets in order to form the world (*kosmos*). Although, in view of our human cognitive limitations, we must represent this process as taking place in stages over time, we must not forget that all these stages in fact occur instantaneously and eternally.

By denying that matter – as opposed to bodies – was in motion, Porphyry eliminated the need to postulate an eternal material soul to explain such motion; by the same token, he could argue that the Middle Platonic introduction of two souls, one rational and one irrational and evil, was superfluous.

In the debate between Porphyry and his Middle Platonic adversaries, we can detect echoes of a debate between monistic and dualistic interpreters of Plato's metaphysics.[36] Here we have an instance of Porphyry's recourse to Plato's so-called Unwritten Doctrines, in that he reports[37] via the Middle Platonist Dercyllides, that Hermodorus, the companion (*hetairos*) of Plato, was already concerned to emphasize that matter is not a principle according to Plato.

Insofar as we can trust our variegated sources, there seems to be an unresolved tension in Porphyry's doctrine of matter. On the one hand, in his *Sentences* and his *History of Philosophy*, Porphyry seems to follow Moderatus and some aspects of the thought of his master Plotinus (who in turn may have been inspired by Moderatus, Numenius and other Neopythagoreans) in assuming that matter is not created: the process of emanation stops after the three hypostases of the One, the demiurgic Intellect and the Soul,[38] so that the matter of sensible things is even farther down the ontological scale than intelligible matter, which is already a kind of not-being. As a shadow of not-being, sensible matter is about as unreal as it can be, but its very distance from reality also seems to make it evil (*kakon*). After all, if, as Porphyry asserts in his *Philosophical history*, Plato said that the divine substance proceeds (only) as far as three hypostases, and the divine proceeds (only) as far as the soul, then matter, which is lower than soul, must be godless (*atheos*).[39] Yet this doctrine,

36 Cf. Frede (1987),1034–75, esp.1052.

37 According to Simplcius, *In Phys.*, 247.30 ff. Diels. Cf. Dillon (2003), 200.

38 Cf. Porphyry, *Philosophical history*, fr. 16 Nauck: γράφει τοίνυν Πορφύριος ἐν βιβλίῳ τετάρτῳ φιλοσόφου ἱστορίας· ἄχρι γὰρ τριῶν ὑποστάσεων ἔφη Πλάτων τὴν τοῦ θείου προελθεῖν οὐσίαν. εἶναι δὲ τὸν μὲν ἀνωτάτω θεὸν τἀγαθόν, μετ᾽ αὐτὸν δὲ καὶ δεύτερον τὸν δημιουργόν, τρίτην δὲ τὴν τοῦ κόσμου ψυχήν· ἄχρι γὰρ ψυχῆς τὴν θεότητα προελθεῖν.

39 Cf. Proclus, *In Alc.* 34.

which Porphyry may have held in the time of his studies under Plotinus, came dangerously close to the heresies of Middle Platonism which, as we have seen, Porphyry fought.

It may, then, have been later in his philosophical career that Porphyry, now under the combined influence of Plotinus and the *Chaldaean Oracles*, hit upon the idea that matter is *patrogenês*, i.e. that God creates matter, a doctrine which he was to bequeath to virtually all subsequent Neoplatonists. It may have seemed to Porphyry that the *Chaldaean Oracles* provided divine, or at least semi-divine,[40] justification for the doctrine of God's creation of matter, a doctrine which eliminated the ambiguities of Plotinus' doctrine on matter. *Qua* created by God, matter cannot be either evil or an independent substance. Matter is a mere capacity for form, while evil is nothing but an illusion caused by our particular individual viewpoint, or at most the inevitable side-effect of Divine Providence's plan for a world that is the best, richest, and fullest possible.

VI Porphyry on Fate, Providence and Free will

As far as fate and providence is concerned, Plato laid the foundations in texts such as *Phaedrus* 248 and *Republic* 617e for the influential doctrine of hypothetical necessity (*ex hypotheseôs*).[41] The former passage contains the statement of the Decree of Adrastus, and was interpreted as a statement of the doctrine of hypothetical fate, according to which consequences follow ineluctably from an initial free choice:[42] if we choose to undertake a sea voyage, this initial choice is free (*kath' hupothesin*); the consequences of this choice, however – i.e., whether or not one suffers shipwreck – are *ex hupotheseôs*, and hence necessary.[43] The basis form of the law of destiny, according to the Middle Platonists, was thus "if x occurs, then y will occur". The passage from the *Republic* contains the famous decree of Lachesis, with its conclusion: "responsibility lies with the one who chooses; God is not responsible (*aitia helomenou, theos anaitios*)". We will return to it below.

According to Porphyry, human beings are free to choose between several alternatives for action. Once they have chosen, however, they are responsible

40 Porphyry's attitude to *CO* seems to have been ambivalent; cf. Lewy (1956). Third edition with supplement Tardieu (2011); Hadot (1968), I, 258 ff.

41 Cf. Den Boeft (1970), 25 ff.; Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato*, 569d.

42 Cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.*, ch. 143.

43 Cf. Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, c. 38.

for the consequences of their choice, which follow necessarily. Human choice thus plays the role of a hypothesis or premise. For Calcidius,[44] who may be transmitting Porphyrian doctrine, free human choice corresponds to a mathematical axiom, while the consequences that derive from it necessarily correspond to theorems.

For the Middle Platonists, Providence, as the intellect or will of God, is superior to fate, which it embraces and contains.[45] All that happens in accordance with fate is according with providence, but the reverse is not true. Human free choice, as an initiating cause lacking an antecedent cause, marks a new beginning in the chain of cause and effect.[46]

According to Nemesius of Emesa,[47] Plato distinguished between three providences:

1. The providence of the first god, exercised over the ideas, the heavens, the stars, and the universals;
2. The second form of providence is that of the planetary gods who concern themselves with the generation of plants and animals.
3. Finally, the third providence, exercised by demons, concerns human life, actions, and the achievement of good things.

It is likely to have been Porphyry who transmitted this constellation of Middle Platonic doctrines to posterity, and in particular to Nemesius and Calcidius. He may have done so in one of his lost commentaries, perhaps on the *De interpretatione* or the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Plato's Myth of Er (*Rep.* 614b–621d) describes the journey of souls on their way to a new incarnation. After their vision of the celestial spindle, they encounter the three Moirai, daughters of Necessity: Lachesis, responsible for the past; Clotho, responsible for the present, and Atropos, responsible for the future. A prophet takes from the lap of Lachesis a handful of lots (*klêroi*) and models or examples of life (*paradeigmata*), and then reads the decree of Lachesis. Each soul is to choose its own demon. The first to be drawn by lot will be the first to choose a new life, to which it will be bound by necessity. All responsibility falls upon the soul that makes its choice: God is not responsible.

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44 Calcidius, *In Tim.*, ch. 150.

45 Cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.*, ch. 176; Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato*, 9, 572f.

46 Cf. Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, c. 38.

47 Nemesius, *De nat. hom.*, c. 43. Cf. Apuleius, *De Plat.* 1, 12; Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato* 9, 572–573a.

The *klêroi*, scattered among the souls at random by the prophet, determine the order in which those souls will choose their new life. The souls are then shown models of possible lives: those who have not practiced philosophy choose hurriedly, often selecting a life that looks good at first glance but in fact contains horrible suffering upon closer inspection. Yet Plato also says that the choice of a new life is primarily conditioned by the habits the souls have acquired in their previous life (*Rep*. 620a2–3), and Porphyry was to inherit this Platonic ambiguity between free will and determinism.

After the souls have made their choice, Lachesis assigns to each a demon charged with ensuring that the fate each soul has chosen is in fact realized. After drinking a draught from the river of forgetfulness, the souls are then dispatched to their new incarnations, like so many shooting stars.

Porphyry interpreted this myth in his lost work *On what depends on us*, fragments of which have been preserved by John Stobaeus.[48] According to Porphyry, the souls between incarnations are initially situated at the border between the intelligible world and the sphere of the fixed stars. Their choice of a new life is not made in random order, but in the order in which they are brought around by the celestial revolution. In a fragment from his lost Commentary on the *Republic*,[49] Porphyry tells us that Plato had learned from the Egyptians the doctrine of the ascensional periods (*peri tôn anaphorikôn khronôn*), or the time each heavenly body takes to rise above the horizon. Proclus, who transmits this fragment of Porphyry, proceeds to mention the *sphairai barbarikai* which demonstrate that human life is determined by the specific features of the *moirai*, or degrees of the zodiacal sign that is in the ascendant at the moment of one's birth.

When the revolution of the celestial sphere has transported it to the place where lives are chosen, Porphyry continues, the soul first chooses a general type of life: that of a man, a woman, or a lion, for instance. Once this choice is ratified by Necessity and the Moirai, the soul is led to the corresponding sign of the zodiac, where it is shown a large number of constellations – Porphyry's interpretation of the *paradeigmata* of the *Republic* (618a). It must now choose a specific type of life as indicated by a constellation: having previously chosen the life of a man, for instance, it might now choose the life of a soldier. The soul then makes its entry into the cosmic region, and descends through the seven planetary spheres toward incarnation in the appropriate body. Both the second

48 Porphyry, *On what is up to us*, fr. 268–71 Smith.

49 Fr. 187 Smith. For arguments that this fragment in fact comes from *On what is up to us*, cf. Wilberding (2011), 123–4; Johnson (2015), 186–201, esp.187 n.4

and the first choice are free, although, as we have seen, they are influenced by the life they have led in their previous existence.

Indeed, says Porphyry, Plato considers fate to be like a law, which does not impose necessity, but ordains that if one robs, one will suffer such-and-such a punishment, and if one behaves well, one will be rewarded in a specific way. If, for instance, one chooses the life of a soldier, one will have to fight, but nothing obliges one to choose a soldier's life. Here, Porphyry clearly takes over two tenets from the Middle Platonic theory of fate and providence: the doctrine of free will, and the doctrine of fate as functioning *ex hupotheseôs*, with consequences following necessarily from a free initial choice.

Aside from his adoption of Middle Platonic doctrines, what is perhaps most striking about Porphyry's theory is his astrologization of Plato's Myth of Er: indeed, Porphyry thinks Plato has derived his theories from Egyptian astrologers. Like his teacher Plotinus (*Ennead* II 3 [52], 1), however, Porphyry believes the order of the constellations at birth indicate, but do not determine the course of an individual's life.

What is primordial, for Porphyry, is free human choice, with fate and necessity intervening only to ensure that the consequences of that initial free choice are indeed realized. This aspect of Porphyry's thought was rejected by subsequent thinkers, both Christian (for instance, Nemesius) and pagan (for instance, Proclus), because it seemed to subordinate the movements of the cosmos to the individual's faculty of choice. No divinity need intervene in the process, according to Porphyry: once free human choice has decided on a type of life, both general and specific, fate and necessity take over to ensure that life is lived down to its last consequence. Everything depends, as in Plato, on the care with which the souls scrutinize the *paradeigmata* that display the content of the lives they are about to choose, *paradeigmata* which, for Porphyry, are equivalent to astrological constellations. Training in philosophy is necessary to ensure a careful successful choice in this most crucial of all lotteries.

The testimony of Porphyry's *On what is up to us* thus seems to allow us to conclude that Porphyry played a major role in transmitting to posterity several key Middle Platonic ideas about fate and providence. These include the subordination of fate to providence, the doctrine of free will, and the doctrine of fate's law like (*ex hupotheseôs*) nature.

VII Conclusion

As far as we can judge from the scant fragments of his Platonic commentaries that remain, Porphyry's approach seems to have been characterized by his

well-known erudition and broad range of interests: an inveterate scholar, curious about all fields of human endeavour in general and every philosophical and religious school in particular, he interpreted Plato by combining Aristotelian, Stoic, and Middle Platonic theories, as well as more esoteric sources such as astrological doctrines and the *Chaldaean Oracles*. Nevertheless, subsequent Neoplatonists, such as Iamblichus, Syrianus and Proclus, often reacted against what they saw as Porphyry's overly down-to-earth interpretations, by which they usually meant that he failed to interpret every part of a Platonic dialogue in terms of intelligible realities. In the view of Proclus,[50] for instance, Porphyry's exegesis of the preface to the *Timaeus* remained partial (*merikôteron*), sticking to details and the realm of appearances (*to phainomenon*), in contrast to the more global perspective of Iamblichus, which raised everything to the perspective of the intelligible, after the manner of a mystical revelation (*epoptikôteron*). Although Porphyry's Platonic commentaries were largely eclipsed by Iamblichus and his successors in the Greek-speaking world, his influence seems to have persisted in the Latin-speaking West, among such authors as Augustine, Macrobius and Calcidius.[51]

50 Proclus, *In Tim.*, I 204.24–27 Diehl. See Pépin (1974), 323–30.

51 See Courcelle (1943).

CHAPTER 18

The Anonymous *Commentary on the Parmenides*

Dennis Clark

Across the history of Platonism in Antiquity the interpretative fortunes of the *Parmenides* underwent significant changes as the dialogue came to be valued more and more as a vehicle for the definition of Platonic doctrine, utilized by Platonists who sought to find in it more than a logical exercise. For the Middle Platonists, it was the *Timaeus* that held pride of place as the source for most of what was considered Plato's conception of nature, creation, and even theology, although it is possible that some philosophers did not completely ignore the *Parmenides*, such as Moderatus, and it is hardly likely that it did not figure to some extent already in the thought of Speusippus and Xenocrates. But for the period preceding Plotinus' direct reference to it in *Ennead* V.1, there is no strong evidence of a concentrated effort in any surviving text which would indicate that the dialogue was seen as primarily informing Platonism. Nor does it appear to have been the subject of any commentary composed before the second century AD, and it was that form of philosophizing which came to be in the later period of Antiquity the main means of extracting from Plato's own texts his doctrine as it was to be rendered by his later followers in their own writings.

Thus in this light the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* (hereafter *Comm.*) likely appears as the earliest extant attempt to practice Platonic philosophy via the means of commenting on the content of the dialogue, which was already hundreds of years old to its commentator. To modern readers and scholars, however, the resultant value of the *Comm.*, as for any other ancient commentary on Plato, is of almost entirely historical value, most useful for inferring the doctrine rather of its author. But it ought to be kept in mind that the later Academic philosophers, such as the Neoplatonists, thought of themselves as true followers and inheritors of Plato, not innovators. The question furthermore arises of how closely the author of the *Comm.* in his reading of the *Parmenides* involves himself in interpretative issues which are germane to any reading of the dialogue, as opposed to viewing it as a touchstone or expediency to enable the importation or imposition of what truly are new concepts, regardless of how much he may have thought of himself as a faithful Platonist. The *Comm.* also needs to be judged in the context of the development of the status of the *Parmenides* itself in the history of Platonism in Antiquity, and as well in the development of the commentary form, as the dialogue grew in importance

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in its reception in the later period. The issue also of the identity of its author, his own philosophical allegiances, and the nature of the Platonism he evinces loom large in any consideration of the place of this unusual work in the antique Platonist tradition, although the salience of the authorship question should not overshadow any philosophical content to be derived from the *Comm.* itself.

The *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* has come down from Antiquity only in fragmentary condition, and was not known to modern scholarship until its discovery in the late 19th century in palimpsest form within a manuscript of the library of Turin.[1] *Codex Taurinensis* F VI 1, originally from Bobbio, consisted of 94 folios containing an evangelarium, judged from its script to be of the 5th to 6th century. Seven of the folios, however, had been taken from an earlier Greek manuscript, apparently of the 5th century.[2] The resulting text produced by the first editor, Kroll, is comprised of six fragments on 14 folio pages, which address the second half of the *Parmenides*, limited to lemmata from the first and second hypotheses.[3] The fragments begin and end discontinuously, so that the first and last lines interrupt the sentences they record. Thus the combined extant text is lacunose between each fragment when taken as a whole, but the line text within each fragment is mostly continuous, with the exception of two corrupted sections of frag. I and frag. II. As to the overall length of the complete commentary, even an estimate would be very difficult to achieve. The extant fragments refer only to the second half of the dialogue, and there is no backward reference in what remains to any earlier section of the *Parmenides* which would offer some proof that the *Comm.* in fact covered the first part of the dialogue, nor can it be known how far it addressed the second half. At any rate, the *Comm.* may well have been of considerable length, and if it may safely be assumed that the philosophical quality of the entire work is as sophisticated as what is highly evident in the extant text, its

1 For a brief history of the text of the *Comm.*, see Bechtle (1999), 17–18, and for more detailed discussion, Kroll (1892), and Linguiti (1995), 67–73. Kroll built on the earlier descriptive work from 1873 by B. Peyron and W. Studemund to publish the first critical edition, fortunately before the loss of the manuscript in the fire at the library in Turin in 1904.

2 The relevant folios are 64, 67, and 90–94, for a total of 14 pages containing 35 lines each of the Greek text in uncials, although the Latin script concluded on 92v, leaving 93 and 94 as not palimpsest. See Bechtle (1999), 18, for the complete ordering of the folios. As to a rough dating of the work itself, the reference to the *Chaldaean Oracles* in frag. IV and the dating of the original Greek manuscript frame the period of authorship between the late 2nd century and the end of the 5th century.

3 See Chase (2012b), 1359–61, and Bechtle (1999), 38–62 for the coverage of the dialogue. That the *Comm.* is a lemmatic commentary appears certain from its general character and the specific inclusion of Plato's text from *Prm.*141a5ff in frag. III.

fragmentary state represents a considerable loss to the Platonic tradition as a whole and certainly to the later interpretation of the *Parmenides* as a major dialogue.

The *Parmenides* is known to have received several formal commentaries in Antiquity, either by report or by the direct evidence of a surviving work. Extant in large part or whole are only Proclus' massive exegesis and Damascius' aporetic treatment of the first hypothesis in his *Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles* and the remaining hypotheses in his own commentary. With the exception of the *Comm.*, all the known others have Neoplatonist authors, according to the authority of Proclus, including Porphyry and Iamblichus. Any attempt to appraise the position of the *Comm.* is challenged not only by its anonymity and lack of certain dating, but also by the fact that no other reported or surviving commentary predates Plotinus.[4] Despite these limitations, some observations can still be made, with some confidence.

Judged from the lower end of its broadest likely timeframe of composition, the late 2nd century, the *Comm.* may well be the first addressed to the *Parmenides*, as a formal work, of substantial length with serious intent to offer what appears to be a cohesive interpretation.[5] That the *Comm.* is also a "running commentary", likely with a determined, if not completely discernible *skopos,* shows itself even from the six extant fragments.[6] Some value can be drawn by comparing the *Comm.* with the *Anonymous Commentary on the Theaetetus*, also unfortunately fragmentary, which must predate the *Comm.*, likely falling within the period of the 1st century BC to 1st century AD; it represents the best surviving example of an acknowledged Middle Platonist commentary.[7] David Sedley has shown that this work reflects the reality of the need after the closure of the Academy for Platonists to restore the authority of Plato via exegesis of the dialogues themselves as the main surviving witnesses of the Old Academy, but that in order to achieve this goal, the Attic language of Plato in many cases

4 For excellent surveys of the philosophical commentary as a genre in antiquity, see Baltussen (2007), Chiaradonna (2012), Hoffmann (2006), Sedley (1997), and for the history of commentary on *Parm.* specifically, Steel (2002), and Brisson (2010c).

5 Steel (2002), 12–13, does point out that Galen is known to have written an epitome of *Parm.* amongst the others he produced of Plato's dialogues, but otherwise affirms this ranking of the *Comm.*

6 See Baltussen (2007), 261–2, of the historical development of the running commentary.

7 For the edition of the fragments and general discussion, see Bastianini and Sedley (1995), and Sedley (1997), 122–9. Cf. the remarks of Dillon (1971), 126, on the character of Middle Platonic commentaries in general, as introduction to his examination of another example, in the fragments of Harpocration.

needed explanation to contemporary speakers of Koine.[8] Hence the *Commentary on the Theaetetus* is likely typical of Middle Platonic commentaries in that it is structured around included lemmata, offering generous but not exclusively philological exegesis, and in that helpful paraphrases not infrequently follow the lemma itself. Its author is concerned also to set forth Plato's doctrine within the context of rival schools, seeking to reestablish on its own a comprehensive Platonic philosophy via commentary. An excellent example comes early in the extant fragments, col. V-VII on *Tht.* 143d1–5, where the notion of *oikeiosis* ("appropriation") as a basis of justice is explicated by, in part, cited rejection of its specific definition in Stoicism and Epicureanism, in a somewhat polemical fashion.[9] In contrast, the *Comm.*, at least in the extant fragments, is not concerned at all with this kind of philological explanation, nor polemic, nor comparison with other schools. Rather its method is to express a specific philosophical reading without much recourse, at least in the extant fragments, to other authors, though Plato always serves according to the writer of the *Comm.* as the authoritative source for the implicit interpretation being laid out. This approach is exhibited in frag. VI, which dwells on the function of the intellect. Although the lemma itself is merely an introductory passage to the discussion of the nature of the second one, before it is demonstrated how multiplicity derives from the second one and being, the *Comm.* here essentially seizes on one phrase, "that one itself", *Parm.* 143a9, and from it the base apparatus of intellect – intellect very much in the sense of a hypostasis – is extrapolated, as it were. In this manner, the *Comm.* displays much more commonality with later Neoplatonist running commentaries, appearing clearly in the vein of practicing what really amounts to original philosophy via the means of an exegesis of a received text of the master Plato, appearing, at least to a modern reader, more exploratory than explanatory.

As is well known, with the shift from Scepticism starting with Antiochus, the Platonists turned to Plato's dialogues as a main source to create anew a positive conception of his thought. Within that process, the dialogues were appraised and categorized as to their subject and intent, but for the Middle Platonists it was not the *Parmenides*, but rather the *Timaeus*, which served a central role.[10] The *Parmenides* was first viewed as merely a logical exercise, either polemical or by some as expository, as Proclus relates in the invaluable survey of the ancient tradition of the interpretation of the dialogue to be found in his own

8 Sedley (1997), 112–16, also citing the fundamental work of P. Hadot (1987), and Donini (1994).

9 See Bonazzi (2008), 598–9.

10 See Runia (1986), 38–57, for an excellent summary of the status of *Tim.* in the period.

commentary on it.[11] Next in chronological order he reports the first metaphysical reading, which denies any ontological precedence to the one of the first hypothesis with its negations, but is an advance on the earlier, purely logical interpretations.[12] Proclus furthermore presents two more schools of the exegetic tradition, both also metaphysical: the first includes those who take the dialogue to describe the complete structure of reality as it unfolds from the One, such that each of the original hypotheses of the dialogue represents a level in the hierarchy of being. The cornerstone of this edifice was laid at least as early as Plotinus, who set the One at the pinnacle of his system and then associated it with the one of Plato's *Parmenides* in the first hypothesis, and then Intellect with the second, and Soul with the third, although Plotinus is not named by Proclus.[13] The accepted list of commentators derived from him is as follows, though perhaps not all of whom published formal commentaries: Amelius, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Theodore of Asine, "the philosopher from Rhodes", Plutarch of Athens, and Syrianus.[14] The number of total hypotheses determined to be in the dialogue furthermore varies across their interpretations, as well as the level of being each is assigned, according to Proclus' report.[15]

The final school of thought presented by him, as last and best, is that of his master Syrianus, who according to Proclus declared the dialogue's subject not merely as being or the only being, but rather as One as the primordial cause of all being – yet also One as God. Thus there ultimately came to be a theological interpretation of the *Parmenides*, and not in any casual manner, one concerned still with a thorough metaphysical exposition of being, but now also within the context of the divine.[16]

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11 For in-depth discussion of Proclus' documentation of the history of commentary on *Parm.*, see Morrow and Dillon (1987), XXIV–XXXIV and 7–9. For the history of the reception and interpretation of the dialogue, see Steel (2002), 11–40, Bechtle (1999), 71–76, Halfwassen (2006), 267–75, and Corrigan (2010), 23–36, the last of whom surveys not only the ancient schools of thought but modern opinion as well.

12 This reading is most likely that of the Platonist Origen, singled out and criticized by Proclus for taking this view. Cf. Steel (2002), 31–35, for this development, and Dillon (1987), 8.

13 See Steel (2002), 15–23.

14 See Saffrey and Westerink (1968), LXXXVIII, for this summary list, and for discussion of the problematic Rhodian commentator.

15 For the history of the exegesis of the hypotheses up to Proclus, see Saffrey and Westerink (1968), LXXV-LXXXIX.

16 Proclus, *in Parm.* I 641–643. See Steel (2002), 38–41 for discussion. Iamblichus is the first Neoplatonist known to have undertaken the theological interpretation in a formal commentary on *Parm.* See Steel (1997a), 15–30.

The question immediately arises of whether the author of the *Comm.* is among these or not: would Proclus, if he were familiar with such a work, totally ignore the formal commentary of a Platonist working at the high level of interpretation which characterizes it? Obviously in its fragmentary state, there is no way to determine how many of the hypotheses the author of the *Comm.* covered, and how or, to be sure, even if he associated each with some level of being. However much the author had addressed the first and second hypotheses in detail, he makes it clear that he considers the one of the first hypothesis to rank at the supreme level. The two fragments covering the beginning section of the second hypothesis clearly concern themselves primarily with intellect or mind and how it proceeds from the one of the first hypothesis.[17] What are the main philosophical elements that can be drawn from the fragments of the *Comm.* to aid in placing it in the above tradition of interpretation of the *Parmenides*?

At the outset it should be noted that throughout the fragments the first one is referred to as god, as *theos* in such a way as to make clear that the author identifies the one of the first hypothesis with god. God, or the one, has an absolute singularity, but must not, as in the thought of Speusippus, be considered reductive or a mere counterpart to or retreat from multiplicity.[18] God is the cause of all things, their multitude and their being, and can be addressed as "one" as long as not in the sense of simplicity or smallness, rather by its hypostasis which is superior. God, though cause of being, is himself superstantial or *hyperousios*, and through him are both one and monad. Just as god is no minimum, nor does he "snatch himself away" from that for which he is the cause of being, as the *Chaldaean Oracles* assert, regardless of their being divine utterances – but will appear thus to humans to whom such things cannot be understood. Nor does he abolish number in the exercise of his power, but remains

17 Given the anonymous nature of the *Comm.*, throughout this analysis it is proper to refer always to the one of the first or second hypothesis under discussion not as the One, the Neoplatonic One, though indeed if the author is post-Plotinian then it would not be inappropriate, but in order not to prejudice the discussion as to authorship, that form at least in English will be avoided.

18 Consistently when discussing this point the author in fact uses Speusippus' own term, *plethos*, not some other, such as *ta polla*, used most frequently by Plato himself in the text under commentary. Unless he is using the term as merely a synonym without further relevance, because he does repeat it more than once, is the author in the first fragment according more than a passing reference to Speusippus, but rather engaging in some more detailed polemic? For studies of Speusippus in the *Comm.*, see Halfwassen (1993), Bechtle (2010), and Brisson (2010a).

one. He allows of no aspects or relations, and is unknowable to humans, and as such the only means of definition of god or the one which is available to humans is by negative theology. God or the one does not divide into knower and known, since there is no difference possible within himself. Yet, by a sort of transcendent type of knowledge, all knowledge is within him.

But god or the one encompasses a sort of idea of being, such that in it, in a way, preexists being, while remaining pure and unmixed itself, beyond substance and being and act, and so causes being to be imparted the one of the second hypothesis, the one that is. The second one participates vertically in that idea of being which is provided by god or the first one, but the nature of the participation with the first one which allows the reception or bestowal of its oneness is horizontal. But his participation is not at all a simple juxtaposition, which effects the procession from the first one. The second one, simple as it is, drawing on the first one, also differs from itself in act (*energeia*) and existence (*hyparxis*): it is not one and simple on the level and the triad of existence (*hyparxis*), intellect (*noesis*), and life (*zoe*). Just so also mind or intellect cannot see itself other than by some power of oneness, some power transcending the act of thought and what is thought, in order to distinguish and hold one from the other. The mind works within the triad as well. The act of thought and what is thought have being and are actions, and by the first term of the triad, existence, the action would be of remaining and not moving. By the second, intellect, the action would be of self-regard, reversion, and by the third term, life, the action would be of having proceeded from mere existence and become indefinite (*aoristos*). So mind, in so far as it is one, by that higher power above action that governs its actions, is not moving nor changing nor subject to any relation; but at the same time it is yet all these things, in its actions, according in fact to the triad starting from existence, then to intellect regarding itself, and expanding to the level of life. So the second one within its orbit ranges from what is beyond measure to that which is boundless in its measure, and mind conforms within that orbit.

There can be no doubt that such a reading is a metaphysical one, obviously far removed from any logical one typical of Middle Platonism, nor can it be in anyway consonant with the view of Origen, who dismissed the first one is as ontologically negatory.[19] Though given that only the first two hypotheses are represented in the fragments, it is clearly a concern of the author to examine the hierarchy of being. The concept of procession furthermore is twice clearly referred to in frag. V and in any way that would imply it is implicit to the

19 For Origen's interpretation, see Morrow and Dillon (1987), 389–91.

author's conception of this hypostatic structure.[20] It is also of no little significance that the commentator identifies, consistently and clearly in no merely metaphorical fashion, the one of the first hypothesis with god as an entity which is above being. To do such is to impose an external ontological framework onto the *Parmenides* and link it in the most fundamental way to theology. There is of course no discussion by Plato himself of the one as god in any of the hypotheses, and so this reading of the dialogue must appear as a noteworthy point in the evolution of Platonism. But it should be added, in consideration of the known development of Platonic ontology across its full history, that this representation of the one of the first hypothesis as well as the association of the second one with Nous both allow or even promote the view that the author, while carefully referring to the one of the first hypothesis and the one of the second, presents in his interpretation of the *Parmenides* a hypostasized structure like that of Plotinus, and those Neoplatonists who followed him.

Did any earlier Platonist associate the one of the first hypothesis with god? There is no direct evidence of such a view, either in a formal commentary on the *Parmenides* or otherwise, but certainly given the loss of so many Middle Platonic texts, this absence of evidence cannot be determinative evidence of absence. Two figures however present themselves as possibilities, and have received much attention as such, and in fact in direct connection with the *Comm*. One is Moderatus, the subject of Dodds' well known study arguing that he had already in his time established an ontological hierarchy of three Ones, based on the first three hypotheses of the *Parmenides*, and indeed one much like that of Plotinus.[21] The other is Eudorus, who does himself place a One as

20 The commentator's term is *parodos*, not the perhaps more likely to be expected *proodos,* within this context of mixed, "horizontal" participation, put forth here as the mechanism of procession, see Bechtle (1999), 169–74, especially on 171, where Bechtle points out that even if not in *Parm.* itself here, Plato does elsewhere present such a mixing, non-hierarchical participation, for example at *Sph*. 254d. For more on this "horizontal" participation and how this passage unfolds, see also Hadot (1961), 422–3, and cf. Brisson (2010b), 277–80. The appearance of the term *parodos* is of significance also for the dating of the *Comm*., although it has not been hitherto noted in the scholarship: if it is pre-Plotinian, then this is very likely the first extant explicit expression of the concept of procession. Or on the other hand, since it is a fundamental element and concern for Plotinus, perhaps it is rather more likely to offer proof that the *Comm*. is either contemporary or post-Plotinian. Could the use of *parodos* in this instance be an attempt to represent in a precise manner this type of "horizontal" participation?

21 Dodds (1928), including in his argument that Moderatus may have commented on *Parm.,* if not necessarily formally. For more on possible pre-Plotinian interpretation of the hypotheses as more than merely logical, especially by Moderatus and other Neopythagoreans, see Tarrant (1993), 148–77.

the highest principle, directly above the Monad and Dyad. He furthermore in fact also refers to the One as *hyperano theos*, interestingly enough using exactly the same expression as appears in the *Comm.* in frag. II. 91v l.12.[22] Both philosophers, it should be noted, worked in the Neopythagorean milieu as well as the Platonic, and so it may be they tended to privilege this sort of henology more than other contemporaneous Middle Platonists did. The main question is, did they look to the *Parmenides* in any way to support those views: in the case of Eudorus there is no direct evidence at all, and in that of Moderatus there is Porphyry's report of the three Ones, and Dodds' persuasive arguments which attempt and have been often accepted to wed them to the dialogue. Yet to be sure, nevertheless, despite the strength of the evidence which he presents and which has been added since his time, incontrovertible proof cannot be found in any ancient source that Moderatus was referring to the *Parmenides.* Alternatively perhaps he was influenced rather by the three Kings found in the *Second Letter*, which may have arisen earlier and been furthermore even established separately from the *Letter*.[23]

Thus, all in all, as far as the existing fragments allow an appraisement, in form and in method, in its philosophical type of interpretation as metaphysical and at least rudimentarily theological, when viewed in light of the known tradition, the *Comm.* is better judged to have more in common with most Neoplatonic commentaries than with what is known and remains of those of Middle Platonism.

Since, then, the discovery of the *Comm.* scholars, not surprisingly, have attempted to determine not just the period of its composition but its author, using a variety of approaches. Given, however, the nature of the extant text, the chief means used to answer this extremely interesting question is the examination of any philosophical content extracted from it, including analysis of terms which can be safely taken from it in order to be considered as technical ones in a Platonic context and evaluated in comparison with known works of other authors. But at the outset it may have to be conceded that the extremely small range of fragments precludes any absolute success, and that the best that can be hoped for is a probability of assignment, or perhaps exclusion of certain philosophers from the authorship. Yet despite the fragments' sparseness, the luck of the remains is such fortunately that they do at least address the first

22 For Eudorus' philosophy, see Dillon (1977/1996), 114–35.

23 See Saffrey and Westerink (1968–1997), II XX–LIX, for history of the exegesis of the *Second Letter*. For a recent critique of Dodds' argument concerning Moderatus, and strenuous reexamination of the "Neoplatonic" interpretation of *Parm.* as a whole, see Gerson (2016), 73–75.

and second hypotheses, and so most definitely engage matters of major relevance to Platonic ontology.

Much of the scholarship on the *Comm.* in fact has concentrated in large part, often in complex argument, on this one issue of authorship. Some years after Kroll had proposed a 4th century Platonist between Iamblichus and Syrianus, Plutarch of Athens was then suggested, but since Hadot's major work claiming Porphyry as the author, more and more scholars have tended to accept his thesis. But others have nevertheless countered that the commentary must be earlier, that it is likely Neopythagorean, and with some also finding additional evidence in Sethian Gnostic texts appearing to parallel passages in the *Comm.* in order to support an earlier, non-Porphyrian author. Others continue to reserve judgment as to any attribution.[24]

Hadot's contention is based on several principles: first, that the *Comm.* assumes the philosophy of Plotinus, since both associate as fundamental the one of the first hypothesis with a One as the supreme principle, and a form of Intellect with the one of the second hypothesis, and by the fact that the treatment in the *Comm.* of the triad hyparxis, intellect, and life appears as being more developed than in Plotinus' conception. Secondly, Hadot finds specific, highly significant lexical concurrences of crucial terminology in the *Comm.* and in works of Porphyry.[25] In addition to these correspondences, Hadot investigates in great depth doctrinal commonalities found in both the *Comm.* and in several works of Marius Victorinus, and attributes their original source as Porphyry, especially the concept of being and the "idea of being" in frag. V, and that of the intelligible triad.[26] Underlying his thesis is furthermore a basic interpretation of Porphyry's

24 For the first editor's reasoning, see Kroll (1892), 624. For a comprehensive and balanced survey of the scholarship, centering on the work of Hadot attributing the *Comm.* to Porphyry, including criticisms and objections, see above all Chase (2012b), 1362–71. See also Hadot (1968), 103–7, denying the attribution by Beutler (1957), to Plutarch of Athens. Taormina (1989), rejects Plutarch as well, but would assign an author of the later 4th century, as does Linguiti (1995), 91. Cf. Zambon (2002), 35–41, and Girgenti (1996), 171–86, for other surveys, in support of Hadot. For a survey given in course of one major expression of the view that the *Comm.* is not by Porphyry, see Corrigan (2000), 141–2. Some have taken the view that Porphyry himself need not be the author, but rather some unknown follower, and at least one scholar has proposed Amelius: Brisson (2010a), 61.

25 Even with the loss of so many of Porphyry's works in which the relevant terminology would likely be expected to appear for comparison with that of the *Comm.*, Hadot compiles a very persuasive assemblage, drawn from *Sent., Historia Philosophiae, Harm., In Cat.*, among others. See Hadot (1961), 429–38.

26 But see Drecoll (2010), for the argument that Victorinus need not have drawn these concepts from Porphyry.

method: that he attempts to reconcile the teachings of Plotinus with those of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, and resolve the conflict of the essentially Middle Platonic position of the *Oracles,* in its view that the supreme god holds in himself Power and Intellect and engages in act and furthermore encompasses a sort of preexistence of the realities, with Plotinus' position that the supreme One is purely absolute, that is does not act, and that Intellect proceeds from the One.[27]

As persuasive to many as the arguments of Hadot continue to be, they have not gone unchallenged. Two main approaches have been taken in criticism of his proof of the authorship. One centers on the thesis that there is in actuality no philosophical doctrine contained in the *Comm*. which could not be ascribed to a Middle Platonist – one, however, who will have espoused those concepts in it in anticipation of Plotinus. Also, given the citation of the *Chaldaean Oracles,* among other reasons, he will have been a Platonist of the time of and of similar views to Numenius, and likely also a Neopythagorean.[28] The other contention centers on the relationship of certain Sethian Gnostic texts to the *Comm*., particularly as regards the emergence of the second one and the triad of hyparxis, intellect, and life. In this view the Gnostic works, including *Zostrianos* and *Allogenes,* are seen as posterior to and centrally influenced by the *Comm*.; in this argument also it is seen as the work of a Middle Platonist.[29] The Gnostic texts in addition exhibit a reliance on apophatic theology as the only means available to mortals to relate to the ineffable, very much like the apophatic usages in frag. 11.[30] Victorinus, furthermore, at least in part (*Adversus Arium* I.49), has been shown rather to share a common Greek source with the Coptic *Zostrianos*, once again likely Middle Platonic in origin, preceding Porphyry, although Hadot has pointed out that this discovery pertains only to the second group of texts of Victorinus put forth by him as evidence for Porphyry's authorship.[31]

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27 Hadot (1968), 482.

28 Chiefly Bechtle (1999), and (2000), and Corrigan (2000).

29 Corrigan (2000), and Turner (2001), 724–44, for two seminal studies, followed by many others, include Rasimus, (2010) and (2013). Again, for an extensive bibliography, see Chase (2012b), 1365–66. Bechtle (2000), 408–12, adds to his earlier work more emphasis on the Gnostic evidence. On the triad in relation to Porphyry and the *Comm*., see Edwards (1990), Majercik (1992), Majercik (2001) and Majercik (2005).

30 For a detailed discussion of its use in *Allogenes*, and many relevant remarks on the use of apophatic measures in general, see Burns (2010). Negative theology was certainly well attested as a key practice in Middle Platonism itself; cf. Carabine (1995), 51–102.

31 Tardieu and Hadot (1996). It is fair to say that there has not been a successful effort to counter completely Hadot's argument based on the lexical similarities between the *Comm*. and known works of Porphyry.

Hence both counter-arguments share the fundamental view that the *Comm.* is pre-Plotinian, Middle Platonic, and likely of Neopythagorean character to some degree. While the possible connections to Gnostic texts are certainly of great interest, it is the Middle Platonic authorship which is crucial, it appears, to both arguments, and a dependence on the likelihood that already in that earlier period the *Parmenides* had been commented on in a metaphysical fashion and in such a fundamental way that at a minimum the ones of the first two hypotheses had been interpreted as representing henological levels of being. But it must be that only those philosophers who also set a One which is also transcendant at the head of their ontological system can be seen as viable candidates.[32] Eudorus, as stated above, did indeed posit a One as the "highest god" above all reality.[33] But certainly the normal view of the Platonic god in Middle Platonism, conceived of as expressed by Alcinous or Maximus of Tyre, as the supreme Intellect within whose compass resides the Forms as thoughts, will not comport at all to the first one of the *Comm.*

A fact, however, not noted previously in the scholarship (cited above) is that the first one in the *Comm.* is referred to consistently and directly, not in any metaphorical way, as *theos*, god (three times in frag. I, five in frag. II, and three in frag. IV), and should offer an aspect of consideration to some degree in determining the authorship. In Book VI of his own commentary on the *Parmenides* Proclus, while presenting how his predecessors understood the subject matter of the hypotheses, confirms that Porphyry is among those who associate the first hypothesis with "the Primal god".[34] Elsewhere indeed Porphyry himself

32 Bechtle (1999), 77–111, for Numenius, Eudorus, and Moderatus, and Bechtle (2000), 405–8, for more on Moderatus, and especially the important consideration proposed by Dodds that Moderatus commented on *Parm.*, if not formally, at least as a part of forming the conception of the three One's, which may of course predate Moderatus himself.

33 As noted by Bechtle (1999), 106. He rightly points out the difficulty given the sparse textual evidence for not only Eudorus but also Speusippus and Xenocrates to allow the determination of the nature and status of interpretation of *Parm.* up to Eudorus' time. Bechtle, nevertheless, without specific proof, attributes a similar view to Eudorus as Dodds does to Moderatus. What, however, is to be made of the usage of *monad* only two lines later in the same fragment, how it actually fits into the ontology expressed there, appears to be a question not fully addressed by any modern editor, though Linguiti (1995), 142–3, does suggest the term may be used analogically to the *monad* as inferior counterpart to the One on lower levels of reality, as in later Neoplatonists.

34 *In Parm.* VI 1054. Morrow and Dillon (1987), 412 n.21 points out that it is the scholiast here who identifies Porphyry. Later at 1069, Proclus himself will declare that the subject of the first hypothesis is god. Although this feature of the *Comm.* apparently has not been overtly to any extent observed in the scholarship, Hadot does cite the phrase *ho epi pasi theos*, as

refers repeatedly to the One as god: in *Sent.* 31 each of several references to the One is made as *theos* without exception, as well as in Smith 223f, one of the fragments of his *History of Philosophy* reported by Cyril of Alexandria, and likely also in another of those, 221f.[35] Thus Porphyry is the first philosopher after Eudorus definitely known to have equated the One with god in more than one text and not just metaphorically, and to have commented formally on the *Parmenides*.[36]

If Porphyry is indeed the author of the *Comm.*, as Hadot holds, since it deals with the first two hypotheses, the work then ought also to be examined for any evidence contributing to the resolution of the apparent contradiction between Porphyry's position regarding the One and the criticism of Damascius (*PA* 43, I 86.8–15 Ruelle), that he made the highest principle of all things rather the Father of the intellectual triad. Such a study has been undertaken, one of whose arguments from an insightful reading of frag. V and VI is that the second one in its relationship (*schesis*) to being implicitly forms a sort of triad in its unfolding, as it gives rise to being, a triad of the One, being, and Difference. It may be observed then that Dillon's implicit triad thus would be embedded in the "horizontal" participation in operation here.[37] So, in a sense, the principle of being appears to reside or at least come into operation, at the second level, but

one lexical item also used frequently by Porphyry elsewhere and thus one hallmark of Porphyry's authorship. Bechtle (1999), 248, and, more extensively, Cazelais (2005), to be sure have shown that the term predates Porphyry handily and is hardly uncommon – but the more important issue must be not the particular phrasing used, but the fact itself of the identification of the first one with god, and that *theos* in any form is used so freely and often for the first one. For more on Porphyry's theological conception of the One, see Johnson (2013), 57–63.

35 Cf. Porphyry (ed.) Brisson (2005), I 332–4, for the Greek text of *Sent.* 31. Porphyry in chap. 34 of *de Abstinentia*, following Apollonius of Tyana, proclaims the impropriety of physical sacrifice to god, again terming him *ho epi pasi theos*, for the reason that he is above all being. Porphyry does not however in this passage make explicit mention of the One, although his description there of the nature of god and the apophatic sacrificial mode due him because of his nature is quite fitting.

36 What, however, of his master Plotinus? The situation in this regard is rather complex, and well explored by Rist (1962), 169–180, in which he lists all the possible instances of references, mostly indirect, to the One as god in Plotinus. It should probably be kept in mind also that Plotinus, as is well known, struggles to denominate the One in any way, and none of Rist's examples is at all as simply nominative as what is found in the *Comm.*, but they certainly nonetheless are noteworthy in this context.

37 See especially Dillon (2007), and for Porphyry's apparently more flexible view of the One than that of Plotinus in the *Sent.*, Dillon (2010), and Dillon (1992), where he first addresses the conflict between Damascius and Proclus with Porphyry, building also on comments of Hadot (1968), and adduced more evidence from other works of Porphyry.

with the One presenting itself in this *schesis* and creating its own triad. But for Damascius, in his accusation against Porphyry (along with Proclus, *in Parm.* 1070), this notion compromises the inviolable transcendence of the One. Even if Porphyry otherwise set it on high, it could not also be brought down or appear to be brought down, subtly or not, into the realm of being and intellect, regardless of the fact that Plato himself explicitly argued that the one of the second hypothesis does act in this way at that level, in the passage under examination here. So perhaps, in a way, the quarrel was in reality more with Plato than with Porphyry, again if he is the author of the *Comm.*, or at least with what Plato postulates in the *Parmenides*.

Whoever the author is, there is no doubt that he provides still a close reading of the dialogue, but chiefly in order to support a metaphysical and theological system not found directly in Plato's dialogues. Its theological nature will perhaps not have been as complex as what is seen in the later interpretations of Syrianus and Proclus, and most likely Iamblichus, and there is of course no knowing what other, if any, theological elements appeared in the remainder of the *Comm.*, but it is certainly at a minimum a step along that road, one that leads far from any theological thought of Plato himself.[38] If the *Comm.* is the first formal commentary on the *Parmenides*, then it is the first step on that road, which will propose a reading of Plato that unifies henology and theology up and down the chain of being, and integrates so many of the ancient Greek gods within its system, and with the dialogue as the backbone of that structure. However esoteric in fact that interpretation may be to Plato's original intent, the author of the *Comm.* again would have seen himself to be working to explicate Plato, not to impose upon him a foreign doctrine.

The difficulties provided by the state of the text of the *Comm.* may never allow any scholar to surmount them to the degree that an absolute consensus regarding who that author is, but even so, much excellent research along that daunting path has already brought greater clarity regarding all the texts under consideration in connection with the *Comm.*, many of which hold their own special challenges. Regardless of whether agreement is ever achieved, much more has been and no doubt will be accomplished in the search to delineate

38 Steel (1997a), 15–30, offers an excellent analysis of the theological elements of what can be drawn from the extent evidence, mostly in Proclus, of Iamblichus' overall interpretation of the hypotheses. There is unfortunately nothing particularly relevant in this regard to be found in the actual fragments of his commentary. See Van Riel (2013), especially 61–121 for the metaphysical aspect of Plato's own conception of the gods, at least as presented in the dialogues, where again it should be pointed out that *Tim.* figures so prominently, not *Parm.*

better the developmental relationship between Middle Platonism, the system of the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the Gnostic texts, early Christian Latin Platonism, and Neoplatonism, for which the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* offers itself as a considerable, if perplexing, witness of what was a new branch taken in the development of Platonism, and which perhaps even also largely marked a crossroads in the reception of Plato.

CHAPTER 19

Iamblichus, the Commentary Tradition, and the Soul

John Finamore

Iamblichus, the third major Neoplatonic figure after Plotinus and Porphyry, was born in Chalcis in northern Syria around 245 CE.[1] Eunapius tells us that he studied first with Anatolius and then "attached himself to Porphyry" (Πορφυρίῳ προσθεὶς ἑαυτόν),[2] which suggests that he may have studied with Porphyry, possibly in Rome. Subsequently and possibly after Porphyry's death in approximately 305 CE,[3] Iamblichus returned to Syria, to either Apamea or Daphne, and set up his own school.[4] Iamblichus died in Syria around 325 CE.

Iamblichus was a Platonist, but he differed from other Platonists in significant ways. He is probably most widely known for coupling Platonic philosophy with religious practice. He had, of course, plenty of precedent in the Middle-Platonic period. Authors such as Plutarch and Apuleius brought religion and magic into their writings, and the *Chaldaean Oracles* made use of both Platonic metaphysics and common magical practices. Iamblichus, however, gave religious practice an ascendancy over philosophy. His arguments were based on his interpretation of Plato as well as on the accepted religious practices.

In the *De Mysteriis*, a foundational work for his religious/philosophical outlook, Iamblichus argued against a more traditional, philosophical view (represented by Porphyry in this work, whom Iamblichus attempts to refute point by point). The work is a careful, rationalist argument for the central role of philosophical magic (theurgy) in his system. At *De Myst.* 2.11, 96.13–97.2 he states his case boldly:

> It is not thinking that brings theurgists into contact with the gods, since what would hinder those who engage in contemplative philosophy from

1 For Iamblichus' biography, see Dillon (1987), 863–75.

2 Eunapius, *VS* 457–8.

3 But see Dillon (1987), 869, where he proposes that Plotinus left Porphyry while the latter was still alive.

4 Eunapius does not say where Iamblichus settled. John Malalas (c.491–578), *Chronographia* XII.312.11–12 writes that Iamblichus taught at Daphne. Dillon (1987), 869–70 admits the possibility that Malalas is correct but thinks that Apamea is more likely.

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> having theurgic union with the gods? As it is, the truth lies elsewhere. It is the ritual accomplishment of ineffable acts, performed divinely, surpassing any intellectual processes, and the power of unspeakable symbols known only to the gods that accomplish theurgical union.[5]

Unlike Plotinus' ascent, which is based solely on the philosophical contemplation of the individual philosopher, Iamblichean philosophy depends on both philosophy and ritual acts properly performed.

This sea-change in Platonism was accepted by all subsequent Neoplatonists of the Athenian School, although there were other areas in which some or all later Neoplatonists differed from Iamblichus, in spite of the high regard in which they held him. In this chapter I propose to examine how some of these idiosyncratic doctrines together with his belief in religious ritual combine with his interpretation of key Platonic passages to create a single, logical whole. The result is a rational, coherent, unified philosophical stance.

I Iamblichus and the Platonic Commentaries

We know from the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (26.10–34) that Iamblichus created the canon of ten Platonic dialogues plus two "perfect" dialogues read in his school and subsequently in the Academy: *Alcibiades*, *Gorgias, Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, and *Parmenides*.[6] He also argued that each dialogue had its own aim or theme (σκόπος).[7] This concept of a σκόπος allowed Iamblichus to narrow the focus of his interpretations of the dialogues but conversely it also allowed more opportunities to innovate and create sometimes startling interpretations as well (although, of course, Iamblichus would not have seen it that way). To take one example, Iamblichus determined that the σκόπος of the *Sophist* was the sublunar demiurge (*In Sophistam* fr. 1.1–2). This allowed Iamblichus to support his metaphysical and psychological theories about Plato's philosophy, including the role of lower-order divinities in the chain from the gods to human beings.[8] The combination of advancing a canon of dialogues

5 This and all subsequent translations are my own.

6 On the canon, see Westerink (2011), XXXVII–XL; on Iamblichus and the canon, see Tarrant (2014), 23–25.

7 On the σκόπος, see Westerink (2011), XXXVI, Tarrant (2000) 92–95; Baltzly and Tarrant's Introduction in Tarrant (2007), 16–20.

8 See Dillon (1973), 245–7 and Tarrant (2000), 94.

with a σκόπος for each was Iamblichus', but it also reflected Neoplatonic metaphysical speculation: just as the universe proceeds from the fully-unified One to the barely-unified world of generation (and conversely the soul's ascent brought about greater unity to each soul as it arose), so too the Platonic texts that explained that universe arose from the unity of Plato's thought through the multiple dialogues and furthermore into the various sections and subsections of each dialogue. The key to rising from what appeared to be a dangerously multiple text mirrored the process of the soul's ascent in the universe itself. The σκόπος unified each of the twelve canonical dialogues, and then all twelve together were unified by the single Platonic vision contained in the multiple texts. Thus the act of studying the Platonic corpus parallels the soul's ascent to the One.[9]

Beyond the σκόπος theory, Iamblichus made use of intertextual interpretations of the dialogues to support his own theory of the human soul, its place in the cosmos, and the role of theurgy in the soul's ascent. Like many Platonists, he adopted Plato's theory of daemons as intermediaries between gods and humans in the *Symposium* (202d5–203a7). Iamblichus could then easily bring in the cortege of the gods, daemons, and souls in *Phaedrus* 246a3–257a2 and ally it with the descent of the soul in the *Timaeus* 41a7–44c4.[10] In his hands, interpretations of Platonic passages became Platonic doctrine, and he would have seen his philosophy as not merely an extension of Plato's thought but rather a restatement of it.

Although later Neoplatonists followed Iamblichus' canon and use of a singular σκόπος for each dialogue and they embraced as well his doctrine that theurgy was necessary for salvation, disagreements still occurred. In what follows, I wish to consider two of these disagreements that bear directly on Iamblichus' psychology and consider how he used the dialogues (especially the *Timaeus*) to defend his interpretations of Plato.

II The Iamblichean Universe and the Place of Gods, Superior Classes, and Human Souls Within It

Before we embark on a journey through Iamblichean philosophy, let us begin with an overview of the Iamblichean universe. It is a rich and varied space,

9 See Baltzly (2017). He compares the role of teacher (as a unifying agent in the school) to that of the Demiurge (as a unifying agent in the cosmos).

10 On the interconnection of these three passages, see Finamore (1985), 125–55 and (2013), 343–54.

meticulously graduated with the higher more unitary beings at the summit and the human soul in the realm of nature removed at a great metaphysical distance from the highest entities. Iamblichus accepted the Plotinian Hypostases (One–Intellect–Soul–Nature), but he added various moments within each. These moments increased the distance between embodied soul and the One, but they also provided more intermediaries to help raise the soul from the body. (See Figure 1.)[11]

Each realm is divided into three moments, and there is some further diversity within the moments as well. Metaphysically, the moments within realms differ in unity and purity from one another, just as each realm does from the other realms. The highest moment of each realm is the Unparticpated (ἀμέθεκτος) moment, that is to say the lowest entities in the realm do not participate in it directly but only through the second moment. The second moment is termed Participated (μετεχόμενος), the moment through which the lowest entities in the realm participate in the second moment and by which they are united with the first moment. These lowest entities are said to be "in participation" (κατὰ μέθεξιν). Further, the lowest moment in a higher realm is the same as the highest moment in the realm directly beneath it, although conceived as less unitary and more closely involved in its own, lower hypostasis.[12]

Having posited this hierarchy of realms and moments within realms, Iamblichus set about to establish our role as human beings in this system, using Plato's texts and other inspired writings both Greek (various Presocratics – especially Pythagoras – Aristotle, and Homer and other Greek poets) and barbarian (Egyptian materials and the *Chaldaean Oracles*). His philosophy was wide-ranging and inclusive, and he believed that ancient pagan learning was unified and led ultimately to the same Platonic truths.

Let us now turn to two areas in which later Neoplatonists for the most part disagreed with Iamblichus. The first concerns the so-called "superior classes". These are souls that exist between the visible gods above and human souls below: angels, daemons, heroes, and pure souls. In fr. 2 of his commentary to the *Parmenides* of Plato, Iamblichus gives a unique interpretation to the topic of *Parmenides*' Third Hypothesis (155e4–156a4).[13] All other Neoplatonists after Iamblichus assigned the Hypothesis to human souls, but Iamblichus assigned it to the superior classes. Here is the relevant portion of the fragment:

11 For a more detailed overview of Iamblichus' complex metaphysical schema, see Dillon (1987), 880–902.

12 See Iamblichus, *In Tim.* fr. 50 and 54 with Dillon's (1973), notes.

13 For a more detailed examination of Iamblichus' interpretation, see Finamore (2010).

> The third [hypothesis, Iamblichus says,[14]] does not yet concern Soul, as those before [had said], but concerns the classes superior to us – angels, daemons, and heroes – for these classes are immediately dependent upon the gods and are superior to universal souls. This is the most astonishing thing they say, and they therefore place this rank before souls in the hypotheses.

Human souls, Iamblichus maintains, do not appear until the Fourth Hypothesis, and thus they are inferior in certain respects to the superior classes. What is at issue among the Neoplatonists is the question of 1) which souls remain above and never descend into the realm of generation, 2) which descend but remained unaffected by that descent, and 3) which descend and become affected by matter. Syrianus, Proclus, and Damascius believed that none of the superior classes descended into generation; only human souls did so. Iamblichus believed that of the superior classes angels remained above; demons, heroes, and pure souls descended but for the most part[15] remained unaffected by the descent; human souls descended and were affected. The superior classes played an active role in theurgy, providing a link between human souls and the gods.[16]

The second area in which later Neoplatonists disagreed with Iamblichus concerned the human soul itself. First, though, their agreement: all Platonists considered soul as the median between Intellect and Nature. In his *De Anima*, Iamblichus first differentiates himself from earlier Platonists, all of whom he accuses (somewhat unfairly)[17] of not drawing the proper distinction between souls and higher entities (*De An*. Section 6, 30.12–13):

> According to this doctrine, the soul in its general essence does not differ from Intellect, the gods, and the superior classes.[18]

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14 Proclus does not name Iamblichus in this fragment, but his name is supplied by a scholiast. See Saffrey and Westerink (1968), LXXXII note 1; Westerink and Combès (2003), 138 n8; Dillon (1987), 387 and 412; Dillon (1973), 387.

15 Iamblichus believed that there was a class of evil daemons: *De Myst*. III.31, 129.28–130.6; III.31, 176.13–177.6; IV.7, 207.7–208.6. These daemons interfere with sacred rites especially when the presiding priest is evil or incompetent. Thus, some of the superior classes are affected negatively by their presence in this realm.

16 For the role of Plato's *Symp.* and *Phdr.* in Iamblichus' demonology, see Finamore (2010), 121–31.

17 On this topic, see Dillon's notes in Finamore and Dillon (2002), 88–91. Cf. *De An*. Section 15, 40.10–12.

18 Although Iamblichus does not state it, his doctrine is based on *Symp.*, *Phdr.*, and *Tim.*, as I said above. The Intellect (equated with the Demiurge in the *Tim.*) is separate from and vastly superior to the human soul; the gods are the planets and stars, the "younger gods" of *Tim.*;

In the next section, Iamblichus endorses his doctrine that the human soul is distinct from all the classes above it (*De An*. Section 7, 30.14–23):

> But the doctrine opposed to this separates the soul, on the grounds that it comes into being after Intellect at a different level of being; explains the aspect of it that is with Intellect as dependent on Intellect but with the power to subsist independently on its own; separates it also from all the superior classes; assigns to it as its own definition of essence either the middle of partial and non-partial <and corporeal and in>corporeal classes, or the totality of universal reason principles, or the service of creation after the Ideas, or the life that having proceeded from the Intelligible has in itself the power to live, or again the procession of classes of all truly existent Being into inferior substance.

Thus, the human soul is in a different class from everything above it. This is why it subsists in a separate Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. The human soul is a mean between those higher entities (including the superior classes) and nature. Iamblichus drives home his point later in the *De Anima* (Section 48, 72.7–8):[19]

> The ancients attribute to the soul a disposition, good in form, similar to that of the gods in intellect [...].

The human soul is not Intellect but it does possess a disposition toward intellection. In this way Iamblichus keeps the soul separated from Intellect, the gods, and the superior classes.

Simplicius in his commentary to Aristotle's *De Anima*[20] preserves the disagreement between Iamblichus and later Neoplatonists about this

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the superior classes are an extension of the daemons who in *Symp.* are intermediaries between human beings and the gods and who are the gods' followers in *Phdr.*

19 For commentary, see my notes in Finamore and Dillon (2002), 210–11. When Iamblichus calls the disposition "good in form" (ἀγαθοειδής), he is adding to the human soul a capacity to access the Good (i.e., the One). See again my notes, 210–11.

20 There is a good deal of debate about whether Simplicius, Priscianus, or another unknown Neoplatonist wrote this commentary. Steel and Boissier (1972) argued that the commentary was by Priscianus since it was similar in style and philosophy to his *Metaphrasis in Theophrastum*. In Finamore and Dillon (2002), 18–24, I argued that the author was neither Simplicius nor Priscianus. More recently I have been convinced by Hadot's (2002) argument that Simplicius is the author and that the similarities between Simplicius'

intermediate human soul. Simplicius introduces his commentary by stating his adherence to Iamblichus' interpretation of Aristotle, whom Iamblichus believed was in harmony with Plato:[21]

> And in every way and to the best of my ability I will adhere to the truth about the metaphysical realities under the guidance of Iamblichus in his own writings on the soul.

We can imagine, then, Simplicius writing his commentary on Aristotle with a copy of Iamblichus' *De Anima* by his side. It is in Extract C that Simplicius explains Iamblichus' unique position on the soul.[22] After restating Iamblichus' Platonic doctrine that the soul is an intermediary between the higher realms and the realm of generation, Simplicius states that it operates at both levels simultaneously and is somehow slipping away from Intellect when it engages in intellectual thought and is also somehow separate from the lower–level activities while it is engaged in the realm of Nature:

> But our soul is differentiated in itself. It is pure, on the one hand, insofar as is appropriate for it, receiving immortality, permanence, and indivisibility from the separated and intellectual life ... In its declension toward the outside, on the other hand, it remains without completely abandoning itself ... But it does not preserve its permanence pure. For because of its declension outside, as a whole it simultaneously both remains and proceeds, and it has neither completely without the other.

The human soul, therefore, is active both in the Intelligible and in Nature, but when it descends to Nature and actualizes it irrational powers, it is still somehow using Intellect and when it ascends to the Intelligible it is still involved with its irrational nature. The soul has a double essence simultaneously in all it does. This concept of a split soul, existing and not existing at the higher and lower levels simultaneously, was rejected by Proclus, for whom the soul's

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commentary and Priscianus' *Metaphrasis* are caused in part by the two authors' reliance on Iamblichus' *De Anima*. This reliance would also explain the commentator's differences in style from other works of Simplicius and his use of vocabulary and technical terminology not found in his other works. For further background and bibliography, see Finamore (2014), 290 n2 and 291 n22.

21 Extract A, lines 18–20, from Finamore and Dillon (2003), 230–31. Cf. my notes 252–3.

22 Finamore and Dillon (2002), 234–7, with my notes 254–6.

activities were separate from its essence.[23] Iamblichus' doctrine is probably a response to Plotinus' doctrine of the undescended soul, a doctrine that Iamblichus (*In Tim*. fr. 87) and later Neoplatonists rejected. Iamblichus' solution is nuanced, and we will explore it shortly.[24]

III Iamblichus and the Position of Soul in the Platonic Universe

Iamblichus has placed the human soul in a perilous position. It spends its earthly life seemingly far removed from the Intelligible and the One, inferior to the gods and the superior classes, stranded in a dangerous environment, and unable to better its condition on its own. The distance between human soul and Intellect might seem impossible to traverse, but theurgy provides the means of reconnecting soul to entities above it.[25] The greater distance is compensated by the interconnection of the realms and the entities within those realms. Further, the gods themselves, although they cannot descend into Nature, can illuminate it with their light. Souls and objects in the realm of generation, if properly prepared and purified, can benefit from this divine light. Finally, there are the philosopher/theurgists, who through philosophical training and practice in religious ritual stand in place of the gods and can aid in the soul's ascent through ritual.

The human soul's double nature is an aid to theurgy and ascent. Even when human beings are fully engaged with Nature and imagine wrongly that their proper place is here and that their proper activities involve activating the irrational aspects of their souls, the soul's essence is still bifurcated and there is a weak link to intellectual activity waiting to be turned on. This is why Iamblichus wrote that the soul has an intellectual disposition (κατὰ νοῦν διάθεσις, *De An*. Section 48, 72.7). The disposition is like a weak electrical current; it is

23 See *ET* § 191 and Chlup (2012), 28–29.

24 As Dillon (1973), 382–3 points out in his commentary to *In Tim*. Fr 87, Iamblichus' doctrine that the human soul falls in its entirety is based on the myth on *Phdr.* His insistence here that the human soul is split, however, seems more a matter of his religious conviction, although of course he would argue that it is consistent with Plato's statements there and in *Tim.* See Dillon's note in Finamore and Dillon (2002), 129–30, where he refers to the mixing bowl and grades of soul in *Tim*. 41d.

25 For the role of theurgy in Iamblichean philosophy, the best source remains Shaw (1995). For the interconnection of philosophy and theurgy, see Addey (2014), esp. 264–82 and Finamore (2013).

not, as Plotinus thought, an active connection. If it were, the vast majority of humanity would be blissfully intellegizing.[26]

Our intellectual disposition becomes activated in the same way as the soul of the lover in Plato's *Symposium* begins its ascent to the Beautiful Itself. Its memory is stirred by something in this lowest realm. Theurgically speaking, it is something that is touched by divine illumination (a sacred stone, a *vox mystica*, a theurgist) that sparks our realization that there is something more than what we perceive around us.[27] As in the *Symposium*, we may not yet know what the something more may be, but our desire is roused to learn more.[28]

Although Iamblichus' universe is vast, it is all interconnected. The distance between the human soul and the Intellect and One is bridged by helpful intermediaries. We have seen that the soul is ranked below the superior classes, and for this reason they can offer their assistance from above. All the superior classes are not the same.[29] Although angels do not descend into this realm, daemons, heroes, and pure souls do. Unlike us, however, they are not affected by matter to the extent that they mis-identify their place in the cosmos. This is the reason that Iamblichus placed human souls in a separate Hypothesis. There is a hierarchy in the cosmos: the One (the subject of the First Hypothesis)[30] is above Being; the Intelligible realm and its gods in the Second Hypothesis are without bodies and completely separate from matter; the superior classes in the Third Hypothesis have ethereal bodies and some remain above with the visible gods (planets and stars) and others either descend purely into the material realm or, in the case of evil daemons, descend and are affected;[31] and

26 Iamblichus, *In Tim.* fr. 87, 200.16–22.

27 For the Iamblichean doctrine of illumination, see Finamore (2013), 350–52. Since the gods cannot descend into Nature, they send their light which affects what is in this realm.

28 This is not to say that Iamblichean theurgy is based on any specific Platonic text. The situation is more complex. Theurgy is already present in *CO* and so predates Iamblichus. See Lewy (2011), 177–226 and Majercik (1989), 21–25. Chaldaean theurgy is imbued with Middle-Platonic elements, and so Iamblichus learned a theurgical practice that was Platonized. Blending theurgy with Platonism therefore was a simple task. The metaphysical hierarchy of the Platonic universe was well-adapted to ritual ascent.

29 For the doctrine, see Finamore (2010), 129–31.

30 The divine henads (fully unified gods) are also included in the first Hypothesis (*In Parm.* fr. 2, 206.3–4). See Dillon (1973), 388. On the henads in Iamblichus' philosophy, see Clark (2010) and Mesyats (2012).

31 If some daemons are affected by matter, then *a fortiori* heroes and pure souls must be as well, since they are lower in the psychical hierarchy. Iamblichus does not offer any examples, nor does he explain how this corruption occurs. Since heroes are demigods who

the human souls who form the subject of the Fourth Hypothesis descend into matter and are affected by it and identify their essence with life in that lowest realm. Now the human beings who have recognized that there is more to their life than this realm of generation offers have already begun to activate their fully-functional (and, as it were, idling) intellectual capacity. By means of this they have now become adapted to receiving help from above. Gradually, they learn more and eventually a theurgist can help them ascend. Their ascent proceeds stage by stage, starting with the help of the theurgist and the lowest of the superior classes. The theurgist is responsible for the necessary rites and sees that they are done correctly.[32] Daemons, heroes, and pure souls descend and assist.[33]

The next step in the process is ascent, and again the process is gradual. Over months, years, or even decades, the repeated rites bring the soul higher and higher in the cosmos: to angels, sublunary gods, visible gods, and then to the threshold of the Intellect itself. It should be noted that not all those attempting this ascent will be successful. Many will stop at an earlier stage, and it is at

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once walked the earth and since pure souls seem to be wise and helpful human beings like Plato and Pythagoras, it can be assumed that in their youth, at least, they had irrational tendencies out of which they grow once they attain reason. See Finamore (1997), 173–6. What is more difficult to explain is why evil daemons go bad and remain that way. It may be that unlike heroes and daemons, they were not at some point born in a human corporeal body, and so their association with matter, since it affects their ethereal bodies instead, might be more harmful and permanent. On this view, the corporeal bodies of heroes and pure souls are affected, which in turn corrupts their ethereal vehicles. Once they mature, they can slough off matter's effect on their corporeal bodies and can thereby return their vehicles to their natural spherical shape so that they are no impediment to them. Evil daemons, on the other hand, have caused damage directly to their vehicles and thereby cause a more serious problem for themselves. This solution, however, must remain a matter of speculation since we do not possess Iamblichus' teaching on the matter.

32 See *De Myst.*, III.31, 176.3–178.13, where Iamblichus writes that evil daemons associate with evil human beings and that these latter perform a kind of dark theurgy that makes use of the evil daemons instead of the gods and that brings no truth or good to the world. Only a properly trained theurgist can be assured of connecting with the gods and not with these daemons.

33 This subdivision of the superior classes derives from Plato's *Symp.*, but carries the notion of intermediary agents further than Plato had imagined. Each intermediary (angel, daemon, hero) is ranked differently and has different functions within the cosmos. Again, as with theurgy itself, Iamblichus is creating a doctrine loosely based on a Platonic text but more naturally associated with ritual and religion.

least possible that some will fail all together and slip back into the life of the masses.[34]

Now we must consider what occurs once the soul succeeds in reaching the Intellect. The human soul has no intellect of its own, only a capacity toward intellectual activity. It has been guided to Intellect through the agency of intermediaries. A successful ascent comes about because the soul undergoes ritual purification, gradually is raised stage by stage to the Intelligible realm, and thereby becomes more likely to attain to intellectual thought. At the moment when the soul succeeds and starts to think intellectually, it is not merely in the presence of the Intellect. It is united to it.

Iamblichus based his argument about how the soul accesses Intellect and uses it to intellegize on Plato's *Timaeus*.[35] His argument presents a fascinating case study on how he used a set of Platonic passages to set out his own unique position. The first set of fragments forms a commentary on *Tim.* 34b3–6, where the Demiurge places the soul in the world's body:

> Having set the soul into the middle he stretched it through the universe and he enclosed the body with it from the outside, and making it turn one circle by another, he established one solitary heaven.

For Iamblichus, Plato is referring to the Hypercosmic Soul, the transcendent leader of the Psychic Realm.[36] In fr. 50, we read that Iamblichus took the word "middle" to mean "equidistant" from all things in the cosmos, since the Hypercosmic Soul is unrelated (ἄσχετος) to everything by virtue of being the first moment in its realm. In fr. 51, Iamblichus claims that the circle of the Hypercosmic Soul turns the corporeal circle of the cosmos. This is not a physical motion of the Soul of course, but rather the Soul while unmoved sets the physical cosmos turning.[37] In fr. 52, in reference to *Tim.* 35a1–4, Iamblichus asserts that of the three soul ingredients (Being, Sameness, and Difference), the indivisible aspect of these should be explained as related to transcendent

34 See *De Myst.* v.18, where Iamblichus divides humanity into three categories: the largest group is those who never rise above the use of practical reasoning, next is a much smaller group that attains to the Intellect, and in between is an intermediary group that follows a life above mere practical reasoning but shy of intellectual thought. See Finamore (1997), 169–70 and my notes in Finamore and Dillon (2002), 161–2.

35 For a more detailed investigation of Iamblichus' doctrine, see Finamore (2014), 284–90.

36 Proclus disagrees with Iamblichus and instead argues that Plato has in mind the Cosmic Soul. For a more thorough investigation of Proclus' view, see Baltzly (2009), 37–41.

37 See the note of Dillon (1973) *ad loc.*

mind, the divisible to the substance co-arranged with bodily mass in the realm of Nature, and the blend to the soul as intermediary. Thus, all soul, from the Hypercosmic to the human, has aspects of three realms: Intellect, Soul, and Nature, and as a consequence would be at home operating in or on each realm. Further, the Soul as intermediary itself, under the direction of Intellect moves the body of the cosmos. Hypercosmic Soul then, qua intermediary, is involved in both the Intelligible and the physical, just as human souls can be. Thus, Iamblichus' view of the Hypercosmic Soul's composition reinforces his doctrine that the essence of the human soul is intermediary and double. As a lower entity, however, our split nature is more pronounced and problematic. The Hypercosmic Soul, however, is not divided from Intellect in the way that human souls are.

Frr. 54–56 concern *Tim.* 36b6–c6. After the Demiurge had mixed the soul ingredients together:

> [...] having split lengthwise into two the whole compound, joining each to the other, middle to middle like a chi, he bent them into a single entity in a circle ... He encompassed them in a circular motion going around in the same way in the same place. Of the circles he made one the outer and the other the inner. He called the outer rotation the nature of the same, and the inner one of the different.

In fr. 54 we learn that Iamblichus thought the passage (as we have seen) referred to the Hypercosmic soul, from which unfolded the Cosmic Soul (as the Participated Soul) and the individual souls (as souls in participation). The splitting was done by the Demiurge, and so (Iamblichus believes) the souls are in origin Intelligible and so have an Intelligible aspect. In fr. 55, Iamblichus interprets the circle that goes around (περιαγομένην, 162.4) uniformly in the same way to be the Intellect, because it is *around* (περί) rather than *in* the soul (162.5–6). Thus the whole Hypercosmic Soul is surrounded by and set in motion by Intellect. It is through the surrounding Intellect that Soul ascends to the Intelligible (164.16–17). Finally, in fr. 56, Iamblichus turns again to the two circles of the Soul and refers them specifically to the Intellect. The Soul's Circle of the Same is the Separated Intellect (χωριστός τῶν ψυχῶν, 164.3–4) since it encompasses and is unmixed (ἀμιγής, 164.6) with souls, while the Soul's Circle of the Other is the Unseparated (ἀχώριστος, 164.4) since it is in the souls and mixed with them. Looked at from the perspective

of the moments in the Intelligible Realm, the Hypercosmic soul is surrounded by the Intelligible: the highest Intelligible moment surrounds the soul as its Circle of the Same while the second moment of the Intelligible Realm is within the soul forming its Circle of the Other. The Hypercosmic Soul itself is equivalent to the third moment of the Intelligible Realm. As such, it has immediate access to the Participated Intellect directly above it (and so can blend with it and have it *within* itself) and has access to the Unparticipated Intellect via the participated since the Participated Intellect has direct access to the Unparticipated Intellect but is separated from the Hypercosmic Soul (and so, as we saw, that Intellect *surrounds* the Soul). Thus Iamblichean metaphysics makes the highest moment of the Psychic Realm (which is the lowest moment of the Intelligible Realm differently conceived) controlled by the two highest moments of the Intelligible. Psychic intellection is an operation from above, and the Platonic Circles are conceived as Intelligible. Intellection comes to soul externally.

These fragments concern the highest moment of the Psychic Realm, but they apply as well to human souls, which are composed (Plato tells us) of the same three ingredients, only less pure (*Tim*. 41d4–7). Thus the circles of our souls, being less pure, are more dependent for their intellectual activity on the Intellect itself. We cannot engage in intellectual thought on our own, but must ascend to Intellect and, as it were, have our circles set in motion by it. We can now see why Iamblichus thought that the human soul had no intellect of its own, but only a capacity toward intellectual thought. Even once we have purified our souls and have ascended above, the circles in our souls could not be activated by any lesser divinity than the Intellect through the Hypercosmic Soul. Whereas the Hypercosmic Soul had immediate access to the Intelligible Realm, access for the human soul is more complex because it is situated at the lowest level of its realm and because it is made of less pure ingredients. We can understand why Iamblichus was pessimistic about the number of people who could think at this advanced level, because it is difficult for the soul to ascend this high in the metaphysical universe. We human beings are dependent on theurgists and our own innate abilities, but most of us do not have the stamina to reach so high. For those of us who can ascend to the Intellect, it will take control of our psychic circles, and we in unison with it will be able to intellegize. We are, of course, in a precarious situation since our souls are weak and structured to descend again even as we are engaged in intellectual thought. Such is our nature, and so we shall

eventually cease intellection and will return to our earthly life, where we will simultaneously be engaged in lower-order thinking and striving to ascend again.

IV Conclusion

We have considered Iamblichus' method of interpreting Plato and producing his own philosophy from it. Iamblichus introduced a canon of readings that culminated in the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*, dialogues that gave the final word on matters physical and theological, respectively. He also introduced the idea that each of these dialogues had its own σκόπος. By ordering certain texts and providing concepts that each dialogue took up and elaborated, Iamblichus focused his philosophy on Platonic texts but also created a means by which the dialogues could be expanded to include concepts that one might not expect. Included among these were Iamblichus' religious doctrines. These, as we have seen, were separate from the Platonic texts but because they were nourished in association with an earlier version of Platonism, they could easily be brought into harmony with Plato's works. Thus, Iamblichus could interpret the dialogues themselves along with the role of ritual ascent that he associted with the dialogues.

We then examined Iamblichus' doctrine of the soul, and its relation to Intellect, the gods, and the superior classes above it. His doctrine is in many ways unique among the Neoplatonists, but he nonetheless based it on the dialogues and their supposed relation to ritual ascent. Employing the *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus*, Iamblichus argued that Plato himself believed that the soul existed in the lowest psychic class, was far removed from the higher entities above it, required the aid of all those entities in order to rise to Intellect, and once there required the direct interaction of Intellect in order to engage in intellectual activity. Much of this interpretation required a careful reading and exegesis of the *Timaeus*, where individual words (and even parts of words) could explain major points in his argument. Iamblichus used Plato to argue against other philosophers, including some in his own school, but it was a Plato infused with theurgic and religious beliefs. We might consider these beliefs as alien to Plato's philosophy but no Neoplatonist after Iamblichus would have.

Metaphysical Schemata of Plotinus and Iamblichus (slightly condensed)[38]

Plotinus	**Iamblichus**
The One	Completely Ineffable One (παντελῶς ἄρρητον)
	|
	Simply One (ὁ ἁπλῶς ἕν)
	/\
	Limit (πέρας) – The Unlimited (τὸ ἄπειρον)
	\/
	The One Existent (τὸ ἓν ὄν)
	|||
Intellect	Unparticipated Intellect, Being (ὄν)
	|
	Participated Intellect, Life (ζωή)
	|
	Intellect-in-Participation, Mind (νοῦς)
	|||
Soul	Hypercosmic (Unparticipated Soul)
	|
	World (Participated Soul)
	|
	Individual Souls (in Participation)
	|||
Nature	Nature

38 Iamblichus inserted an Intellectual Realm just beneath the Intelligible. I have collapsed those two realms into one for the sake of simplicity and for easier comparison with Plotinus' scheme. He also added, in his lost commentary on the *co*, a realm between these two, the Intelligible-Intellectual Realm. Thus, the distance between embodied human souls and the One is even greater than this chart shows.

CHAPTER 20

Amelius and Theodore of Asine

Dirk Baltzly

I Evidential Prolegomenon

At the opening of his *Platonic Theology*, Proclus locates himself and his teacher in his version of the history of the reception of Plato's thought.

> Those interpreters of the vision (*epopteia*) of Plato who have revealed the most sacred guidance concerning divine matters and who were allotted a nature nearly like that of their guide I would identify as Plotinus the Egyptian and those who received the sight (*theôria*) from this man. I mean Amelius and Porphyry and, in the third place, those who seem to us to have come to be from them "like potent statues" – Iamblichus and Theodore, and any others after them who, following this divine chorus, have in their own thought experienced the Bacchic frenzy of Plato's teachings. (*PT* I 1.6.16–7).

Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus are household names – at least for those who take an interest in late antique Platonism. But we know far less about the other two names in Proclus' chorus of Bacchants: Theodore of Asine and Amelius. The problem lies in the nature of our sources: we know the views of these writers only on the basis of testimonia about them and the nature of testimonies involve significant interpretive uncertainties.

In the case of Theodore, the testimonia come overwhelmingly from Proclus. Deuse, who prepared the only edition on Theodore, identifies 46 testimonia, some of which he himself regards as doubtful.[1] Of these 46, 35 come from works of Proclus. Damascius is next in line with four testimonia, but three of these come from his commentaries on the *Phaedo* and the *Philebus* – works that in many ways define themselves in relation to Proclus' commentaries on

1 Deuse (1973). The situation may be even worse than it looks, for it seems entirely possible that Proclus himself is dependent upon Iamblichus' commentaries for his knowledge of Theodore. O'Meara (1974) raises this possibility in his review of Deuse. For a parallel argument for the likelihood that Proclus' knowledge of Numenius is similarly mediated by Iamblichus, see Tarrant (2004).

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these dialogues. So it is quite possible – perhaps even likely – that Damascius knows Theodore's philosophy only through Proclus. The other testimonia for Theodore are mostly of a biographical nature and come from Eunapius, the Emperor Julian, and perhaps Libanius, with a few doxographical snippets from Nemesius, Ammonius and Stobaeus.

The sheer volume of Proclus' surviving works make him our primary source of information for the views of many Platonists, so there is nothing unusual in his role as primary source for any lost Platonist philosopher. However, there are reasons to treat Proclus' reports on Theodore with more than the usual caution. Though Proclus lists Theodore as among the Bacchants who have received the true vision of Plato's philosophy from its rebirth in Plotinus, when we turn to those occasions when Proclus reports the views of Theodore and responds to them, he and Syrianus are almost always in disagreement with Theodore. Indeed, reading the context of the testimonia on Theodore found in Proclus leads one to wonder exactly why he is numbered among the Bacchants: there isn't much that Proclus thinks that he is *right* about. Further, both Theodore and Amelius are linked in Proclus' mind with the philosophy of a Platonist who is most definitely *not* in the lineage of approved philosophical predecessors: Numenius. Immediately following what is by far the longest and most detailed account of the views of Theodore (*in Tim.* II. 274.10–278.25 = T6, Deuse), Proclus immediately follows this survey with Iamblichus' criticisms from a work entitled *Refutations of Amelius and his school and of Numenius*. This makes a certain amount of sense when we consider that Proclus introduces the long passage on Theodore by describing him as someone "filled up with the works of Numenius". Thus Proclus' relation to the philosophy of Theodore seems to be distinctly ambivalent. Sometimes he is the "great Theodore" (T10 = *in Tim.* III 226.6, ff). He pursues the teachings of Plato in an inspired manner, like Iamblichus (T8 = *PT* IV 68.6, ff). At other points he is just too eccentric (T22 = *in Tim.* II 215.29) or innovative (T 23 = *in Tim.* III 24.30). He is the author of "puffed up" notions (T26 = *in Tim.* III 245.19, ff). We must bear this ambivalent attitude in mind when we turn to assess Proclus' evidence for Theodore as an interpreter of Plato.

Similar problems attend our evidence for Amelius. Luc Brisson is the only person to have made an attempt to sum up the work of Amelius.[2] In his introduction he writes:

2 Brisson (1987). In an appendix to the article Brisson identifies 72 passages in which Amelius and his views are discussed. Twenty of these come from Porphyry's *V.Plot.* and are primarily biographical, but 31 more philosophically meaty passages come from Proclus, with another seven from Syrianus and Damascius.

> One can compare the work of Amelius to a vast building long fallen into ruin – a building whose remains have over the years been employed again in the construction of other buildings. Embedded within these alien structures, the fragments that remain of Amelius' thought occur in radically different contexts which distort our view of them and where polemic may make them unrecognizable.[3]

As with Theodore, Proclus and Syrianus are major sources of our information on the philosophy of Amelius, and Proclus evinces much the same ambivalence toward Amelius too. We have, in addition, the testimony of Porphyry, but here too there are complicating factors. Most of what Porphyry tells us about Amelius comes in the context of his *Life of Plotinus*. This work forms an introduction to Porphyry's edition of the writings of Plotinus. But, as Brisson argues, Amelius held an earlier role as the keeper of the school's edition of the works of Plotinus.[4] He and Porphyry were thus, in some sense, rivals to the philosophical inheritance of Plotinus.

With these caveats about our evidence, let us proceed to examine that evidence with the following questions in mind: What specific works of Plato did Amelius and Theodore engage with and what form did that engagement take? Are there specific reading strategies that they utilised to interpret Plato's works? Finally, let us ask: How did they situate Plato in relation to other authoritative texts?

II Platonic Commentators?

We are somewhat better informed about the works of Amelius than those of Theodore, largely thanks to the biographical details offered by Porphyry. We know from Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* that he was present in Rome with Plotinus from 246 CE until he left in 269 (*V.Plot.* 3.38–42). We also know from Porphyry that Amelius' first philosophical allegiance was to Stoicism (*V.Plot.* 3.42–3).[5] In addition, we know that at some point he developed a deep interest in the works of Numenius, and this is important for it confirms what Proclus tells us. In the year 270, Porphyry reports him in Apamea – the city of

3 Brisson (1987), 795.

4 Brisson (1987), 809.

5 Brisson (1987), 800 detects a continuing legacy of Stoic influence in Amelius' remarks on *logos* and Fate.

Numenius – having stopped en route in Tyre to provide Longinus with some of the works of Plotinus (*V.Plot*. 19.23). There is some reason to believe that he remained in Apamea for some time since this would explain the entry in the *Suida* that seems to make him a citizen or resident of that city. We can posit a date of birth for him around 216–226 on the assumption that he joined the school of Plotinus as a young man of twenty to thirty years old and speculate that he might have lived to 290–300.

Porphyry reports only on the writings that Amelius undertook while Porphyry knew him. These include very extensive *scholia* on the lectures of Plotinus and copies of all the works of Numenius, which Porphyry tells us Amelius knew nearly by heart (*V.Plot.* 3.43–49). These works ended up in Apamea with Amelius' adopted son, Hostilianus Hesychius. Porphyry also tells us that he and Amelius wrote works to mop up any loose ends from Plotinus' attack on the Gnostics. Amelius' contribution was 40 books against the "Book of Zostrianus", while Porphyry took as his mission to expose the "Book of Zoroaster" as a modern forgery (*V.Plot*. 16.13–14). We can see some of the content of Amelius' work in Eusebius, who preserves from it an interpretation of the opening lines of the Gospel of John (*PE* 11 18.26–29.1). Porphyry tells us that he also wrote a work entitled "On the Differences between the Doctrines of Plotinus and Numenius" and includes the letter dedicating that work to him (*V.Plot.* 17). This work sought to state Plotinus' views more clearly than perhaps Plotinus himself had. Porphyry goes on to explain that Plotinus had given to Amelius the task of refuting Porphyry's initial view that the intelligibles are outside the intellect. This seems to have produced an essay by Amelius "On the aporias of Porphyry", which prompted a written response on Porphyry's part, which in turn elicited a "Rejoinder to Porphyry" from Amelius. This last work permitted Porphyry to finally grasp with difficulty what Plotinus thought and he came to accept it. Letters from Longinus quoted in Porphyry testify to the existence of other works as well. We find some writing on the justice according to Plato (*V. Plot.* 21.89) as well as letter to Longinus "On the Method of the Philosophy of Plotinus". So much then for what we know about Amelius' writing on the basis of Porphyry.

With the exception of something that Amelius had written about Plato's view on justice, all the works described by Porphyry centre around other Platonists, such as Numenius or Plotinus, rather than the dialogues of Plato himself. Did Amelius write commentaries – or at least notes – on Plato's dialogues? Did he lecture in the school of Plotinus on Plato?

Some of the testimony from Proclus suggests that Porphyry's list of works may not exhaust Amelius' writings. Thus, for instance, *in Tim*. II 300.23–301.25 reports Porphyry's account of Amelius' puzzlement about the correct

textual reading at *Tim.* 37a6.[6] Certainly Proclus frequently adverts to Amelius' views on the various Demiurges that Amelius supposed to be implied by what Plato says in the *Timaeus*. But again, we cannot be certain whether these views derive from an essay on the subject or a commentary on the whole of Plato's dialogue. Similarly, we have evidence from Proclus' *Parmenides Commentary* (1052.31, ff) that Amelius had views about the number and subject matter of the hypotheses that make up the latter part of Plato's dialogue. But it is unclear that these views were expressed in the form of a commentary on that dialogue. Some of the reports on Amelius from Proclus' *Republic Commentary* seem likely to have come from the essay that Porphyry mentions on "Justice in Plato's *Republic*" (*in Remp.* I 24,7, ff). Other testimonia from Proclus, however, seem less likely to have been drawn from this essay. Thus the reports of Amelius' views that appear between *in Remp.* II 29.5 and II 32.17 seem to be prompted by concerns about the meaning of specific phrases in *Rep.* 546a–b. Similarly, the report at *in Remp.* II 275.30 is one that Proclus relates directly to the interpretation of *Rep.* 617e3: "virtue has no master".

An author can, of course, offer readings of specific words and phrases in a Platonic dialogue without writing commentary on that dialogue in the style of Syrianus, Proclus and company. It could be offered in the course of an essay that takes off from an interpretive problem in Plato, as many of Plotinus' *Enneads* do. The evidence available to us is *consistent with* the hypothesis that some of Amelius' philosophical writings at least exhibited the sustained and systematic engagement with individual dialogues that is characteristic of the commentary tradition. But I think very little of that evidence positively recommends the hypothesis. The strongest indication is perhaps the report of Amelius' views on the hypotheses in the *Parmenides* but this is by no means decisive.

What about Theodore? In terms of biographical facts, we are largely in the dark. Damascius implies that he studied with Porphyry, while Eunapius tells us that he was at one time student of Iamblichus.[7] Both are of course possible and this perhaps suggests a range of dates between 275 and 360 CE. A letter from the Emperor Julian implies conflict between his followers and the followers of Iamblichus.[8] So it would seem the two came to some parting of the ways and, perhaps, that Theodore himself had a school, though we know not where.[9]

6 Lautner (1997).

7 Damasicus, *PH* 110. Athanassiadi (1999) = T1, Deuse; Eunapius, *VS* V 1.4.3–1.5.5 = T2.

8 Julian, *Letters* 12 = T4.

9 Brisson (1987) left it open that Amelius might have met Theodore when the former was an old man in Apamea, but Brisson (2010d) concludes that there is no reason to think the two met in person.

Our testimonia identify two works by name. The first is called *On Names* and we know that in it Theodore offered a reading of the sub-celestial arch mentioned at *Phdr* 247b1 (T8, Deuse). I think we may also assume with a fair level of certainty that this work included Theodore's derivation of the first principles of his metaphysics from the nature of the word ἕν (T9) and possibly his exegesis of the symbolic significance of the word ψυχή (T6). The other title we know of is *That the Soul is all the Forms*. Here our informant is Nemesius and he nicely contextualises Theodore's work for us. He presents Theodore, along with Cronius and Porphyry, as champions of the view that human souls can enter animal bodies. He informs us that Iamblichus opposed this view and wrote a work against it entitled *That transmigrations from humans into irrational animals do not take place, nor from irrational animals into humans*. Importantly, Nemesius also presents this as a disagreement among Platonists about whether Plato's remarks on human souls passing into animals are to be taken literally or figuratively. Since there are a variety of Platonic passages in which this idea comes up, it would seem that both *On Names* and *That the Soul is all the Forms* take the proper interpretation of key phrases or claims in Plato's dialogues as their point of departure. It seems probable that these thematic essays drew on the evidence of a number of Platonic dialogues.

In addition to these thematic essays, did Theodore write commentaries on Plato's works? One of our longest testimonia comes from Proclus' *Republic Commentary*, but consideration of its content does not recommend the hypothesis that it was drawn from a line-by-line commentary on Theodore's part. Indeed, it seems more plausible that either (1) the arguments reported by Proclus are also drawn from Theodore's essay on transmigration or (2) that if there was a work on the *Republic* by Theodore, it was more like Proclus' own *Commentary* – a collection of essays on key themes or questions in Plato's dialogue.

At least as Proclus reports it, Theodore's engagement with the education of women in the *Republic* centres on the question of women's virtues. Are they the same as men or different? Do they have their own virtues or none at all? He addresses the question of the virtue of women philosophically, historically, theologically, physically and finally adds a proof from an Egyptian priest. These perspectives – often labelled as such – are common to the subsequent commentary tradition. But there is little direct engagement with the text of Plato. Importantly, Theodore does not take up the question that occupies Proclus himself for a long time: how does one square what is said in *Republic* V with the account of women as the reincarnated souls of men from *Timaeus* 42b2–d1?[10] Or at least Proclus does not present him as offering any reconciliation of the apparent tension between these passages.

10 Baltzly (2013).

Two testimonia from other sources, however, do add some weight to the idea that Theodore wrote commentaries. Damascius' *Commentary on the Philebus* (§3 = Theodore, T43) reports the view of Theodore's companion on the *skopos* of this dialogue:

> Peisitheos the companion of Theodore of Asine deemed it worthwhile to say that the dialogue deals with Intellect as the *Parmenides* is concerned with the Good. This is because the argument concerns the mixed life and because Intellect is the first ingredient.

First, let us assume for the sake of argument that Theodore shared this view with Peisitheos – a philosopher about whom we otherwise know nothing. In all our surviving commentaries in the Neoplatonic tradition the specification of the *skopos* is a vital element in the introduction to the dialogue. Perhaps we can couple this with a similar report on the *skopos* of Aristotle's *Categories* (Ammonius, *in An. Pr.* 1.9–18 = Theodore T44*). It is possible that Theodore could have had views on the *skopos* of these works without having written commentaries on them. Alternatively, it is possible that Ammonius and Damascius are characterising some sort of contribution on these works by Theodore in terms that seem natural to them: he didn't write a commentary that began with the specification of a *skopos*, but they express the import of whatever work they had before them in the standard terminology. However the simplest explanation for why subsequent writers have reported Theodore's views on Aristotelian or Platonic works in terms drawn from the commentary tradition is surely that it was because he wrote commentaries on these works. Such commentary writing, or at least lectures on Platonic dialogues that students might have recorded, would be a normal expectation if Theodore did, in fact, have a school. Thus it seems to me that in the case of Theodore we have slightly better evidence for a systematic engagement with both Plato and Aristotle in the form of commentary writing than we do in the case of Amelius.

III Their Engagement with Plato's Dialogues

One way to pose the question of a Platonist's role as an interpreter of Plato is to ask *which* dialogues in particular the Platonist in question spends most of his time and effort on.[11] With Platonists who follow after Iamblichus, the pattern

11 The importance of judgements about which Platonic dialogues are really central to Neoplatonism is explored in Tarrant (2014)

of engagement with the Platonic corpus is clearly shaped by the canonical ten dialogues and, in addition, the role of the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus* as "crowning dialogues". The centrality of the *Parmenides* to a Platonist's engagement with Plato's works is particularly important, for it is characteristic of the Neoplatonist (and perhaps the Neo-Pythagorean) reception of Plato to treat the *Parmenides* as conveying Plato's theology in a particularly concise and systematic manner.[12] Are Amelius and Theodore like these Platonists?

One of the most notorious views of Amelius shows the extent of his engagement with the *Parmenides*. Amelius apparently posited Forms for things that are evil.

> Amelius – I know not from what motivation – supposed that there are also *logoi* of evil things present to the Demiurge.[13]

Proclus, at *in Parm.* 829.22 and *PT* I 98.16–20, notes the view that there are intellectual paradigms of evil things though without naming Amelius in this connection.[14] The discussion at *in Parm.* 829.22 follows the lemma at *Parm.* 130c5–d2 where Parmenides asks Socrates about whether there will be Forms for things that are base and dishonourable. Any careful interpreter of Plato's dialogue must surely come to grips with such a question. But why answer it in the affirmative? Why suppose that there are Forms for evil things?

Proclus' *On the Subsistence of Evils* gives us what I believe was Amelius' reason and this shows us something about Amelius' as a reader of Plato. *De malorum subsistentia* §43 poses an argument – which of course Proclus will go on to reject – for positing Forms of evil things. Proclus alludes to one potential understanding of Socrates' remark at *Theaetetus* 176a7–8 that "evils hover over the realm of mortal nature of necessity". One could take this to mean that evil things are *eternally* present to the realm of mortals. But images that exist eternally must have an eternal paradigm. So there are intellectual Forms of evils things. It is this line of argument, I believe, that prompted Amelius to accept paradigms of evils.[15]

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12 Tarrant, art. cit., 29 n.22.

13 Asclepius of Tralles, *Commentary on Nicomachus of Gerasa's Introduction to Arithmetic,* Tarán (1969), 1.43–5

14 But that's not surprising: both works contrast with the *in Tim.* in as much as the views of other philosophers are discussed, but not attributed. I assume that it is Amelius that is under discussion and that the context of Proclus' remark tells us something about what prompted Amelius to propose such a thing.

15 Cf. D'Hoine (2010).

If this is the correct understanding for Amelius' motivation, then this shows us several things about him as a reader of Plato. First, he had took pains to address a puzzle in one of the two dialogues that the Neoplatonists regard as the twin summits of Plato's philosophy – the *Parmenides*. Moreover, we know that this engagement was not confined to the initial, aporetic section of the dialogue. Proclus *in Parm.* 1052.31–1053.9 shows us that he had a developed view about, first, the structure of the latter part of the dialogue (it contains eight, not nine hypotheses) and, second, about the different levels of being that those hypotheses are meant to be about. Furthermore, if the above speculation is correct, then we can see him bringing another of the Neoplatonists' canonical dialogues – the *Theaetetus* – to bear on the interpretation of the *Parmenides*. Finally, it would seem that Amelius supposed that Plato's philosophy cannot simply be "read off" what the character Socrates says, for in the *Parmenides* Socrates says that he supposes that there are not Forms for things that are base and dishonourable (though, of course, he hints that he is not entirely confident in this initial judgement).

Amelius' engagement with the Neoplatonists' other capstone of Plato's philosophy – the *Timaeus* – exhibits a similar commitment to inter-textual interpretation of the dialogues. We do not know what Proclus thought about other aspects of Amelius' understanding of the dialogue, for he seldom mentions him in the *Timaeus Commentary*,[16] but he certainly disagreed with Amelius' view that the dialogue contains three Demiurges. This reading looks as if it is initially grounded in a rather pedantic treatment of *Timaeus* 39e7–9:

> Therefore, in as much as intellect *saw* that "that which Living Being is" (*ho esti zôon*) *had* forms present to it, being such in number and kind, he *thought* it necessary for this [universe] too to have such things.

Proclus explains that this passage was regarded by Amelius as the textual basis for the three demiurges.

> It is from these words in particular that Amelius established his triad of Demiurgic intellects. He calls the first "that which is" (*onta*) from the phrase that "which Living Being is", while the second he calls "that which has" (*exonta*) from the fact that it "has" [forms present to it] (for it is not

16 The remarks in Proclus' *in Tim.* on Amelius address three themes. First, the proper interpretation of the Atlantis myth (two testimonia); second, the identity of the Demiurge and his relation to the Paradigm (six testimonia); and the interpretation of the numbers in the soul (one testimonium). We also find a remark on participation relations among Forms.

> the case that the second intellect *is* [the forms] but they are instead introduced in it), while the third intellect is "that which sees" from the fact that it "saw" [that it had these forms]. (*in Tim.* III 103.18–24)

Proclus goes on to reject this idea, but also to connect it to the view of Numenius (fr. 22 Des Places). In the next paragraph, he provides Iamblichus' refutation (fr. 71 Dillon) of *these* – note the plural – men. It seems plausible to suppose that this material is drawn from Iamblichus' "Refutations of Amelius and his school and of Numenius". But intertextuality in the Platonic corpus enters elsewhere when Proclus explains that Amelius justified his view on the three Demiurges by reference to *Letter II*:

> Amelius hypothesises these three intellects and demiurges and [identifies them with] the three kings of Plato and the three Orphic [figures] of Phanes, Ouranos and Kronos, and according to him it is Phanes in particular who is the demiurge. (*in Tim.* I 306.10–14)

The "three kings of Plato" is clearly a reference to 312e. Now *Letter II* is neither ignored nor widely referred to – much less discussed extensively – in the works of other Platonists.[17] So it is not that the recourse to this intertextuality as such that is rejected by Proclus. (Nor, of course, would he be in principle opposed to confirming a reading of Plato by showing how it aligns with Orphic theology.) Rather, what Proclus objects to is the mistaken use of alleged connections between one Platonic work and another. Had Amelius applied the distinctions among the three kings of *Letter II* to the *activities* of the single Demiurge – rather than multiplying those activities into a plurality of *numerically distinct gods* – then Proclus thinks that there would be no problem (*in Tim.* I 361.19–26).

17 Cf. Plotinus, VI 7 42, 1–24. Proclus ranks it of third importance in communicating Plato's theology (*PT* I 24.24–25.2). This fact does not prevent him from giving it significant attention (*PT* II chs. 8 and 9), though much of his effort in this regard seems to be directed at countering what he regards as the misuse of the passage by Numenius and Amelius. On the role of *Epistle* II in the Neoplatonic tradition generally, see Saffrey & Westerink (1968–97) vol. II, XX–LIX. It should be added, however, that Proclus' use of *Ep.* II to interpret *Tim.* – a dialogue of the first importance – is modest. At *in Tim.* I 356.10 it is used as an additional confirmation of the premise that all things result from the Good and *in Tim.* I 393.19 reports a similar use by Porphyry. At I 308.12 it is invoked in an objection against Iamblichus. It seems plausible to me that Proclus himself would baulk at using a less important work, like *Ep.* II, as an essential key for unlocking the meaning of *Tim.*

Turning now to Theodore, the question of the centrality of the *Parmenides* to his approach to Plato is harder to assess. If we follow the hypothesis of Saffrey, however, then we will think it right to say that he, like Amelius, had a synoptic account of the structure of the latter part of the *Parmenides*.[18] The crux of the matter is whether Theodore should be identified with "the philosopher from Rhodes' that Proclus refers to in his *Parmenides Commentary*.

Saffrey notes that Proclus' survey of views about the structure and subject matter of the eight or nine hypothesis of the *Parmenides* corresponds neatly with the Bacchic chorus of Platonists in *PT* 1.1, 6.16, ff. At *in Parm.* 1052.31, ff Proclus relates the views of some of his predecessors. The scholiast to the manuscript identifies these men, in order, as: Amelius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus. Proclus himself calls the fourth Platonist "the philosopher from Rhodes". There then follows the views of Plutarch of Athens and Proclus' teacher Syrianus. Saffrey's tabular presentation makes the attraction of a certain identification obvious.

TABLE 20.1 *Saffrey's correlations between Proclus' Bacchants and the Platonists discussed in his Parmenides Commentary*

PT	***in Parm.***
Plotinus	
Porphyry	Porphyry
Amelius	Amelius
Iamblichus	Iamblichus
	The philosopher from Rhodes
Theodore of Asine	
	Plutarch
Syrianus	Syrianus

If "the philosopher from Rhodes" were Theodore of Asine, we'd have one less mysterious Platonist populating the pages of the *Parmenides Commentary*. What does Proclus tell us about the philosopher from Rhodes?

Proclus holds out particular praise for this philosopher, crediting him with being the first to see the hypotheses that begin with the sixth are *reductio* arguments. They show the absurdity of denying the existence of the One for the subject matter of corresponding positive hypothesis. Thus, according to the philosopher from Rhodes, the second hypothesis concerns "intellect and the

18 Saffrey (1984a) and (1994).

intelligible" while the seventh with which it is to be paired shows that if intellect and the intelligible do not exist "we overturn all true statements about them." So, in contrast to the philosophers who come before him on the list, the philosopher from Rhodes needs to specify subjects only for the first five hypotheses.

1. The One
2. Intellect and the intelligible
3. The objects of *dianoia* that come after the intelligibles in the doubly-divided line of *Republic*
4. The corporeal forms that are next after the objects of *dianoia*
5. The Receptacle of bodies

So it appears that our philosopher from Rhodes is someone who thinks that the distinctions drawn in the *Republic* shed light on the structure of the hypotheses in the *Parmenides*. Our testimonia on Theodore reveal significant engagement with the *Republic*. So perhaps that fits.

The problem that initially confronted Saffrey was that he couldn't see how to make our testimonia on the order of being for Theodore match up with the philosopher from Rhodes' structure for the *Parmenides*. Our fullest testimonia on the first principles of his metaphysics are T6 and T9 (Deuse). They recommend the following picture:

1. "The first" which is utterly inexpressible.
2. A triad that comprises "the intelligible" and it is revealed through the name One (*hen*). The rough breathing is the closest approximation to the inexpressible first principle from which the intelligible triad results.
3. A triad that comprises the intellectual depth (*bathos*): "the being (*to einai*) prior to Being (*to on*), the knowing (*noein*) prior to Intellect (*nous*), and the living (*zên*) prior to Life (*zôê*)."
4. A demiurgic triad: Being, Intellect and the "source of souls".
5. A psychic triad: Soul-Itself, Universal Soul, and the World Soul. While these three result form the Demiurgic level as a whole, Soul-Itself is particularly related to Being, Universal Soul to Intellect, and the World Soul to the source of souls.

Saffrey made the two lists correspond by supposing that the inexpressible First could not be "the One" that Proclus tells us was the subject of the first hypothesis according to the philosopher from Rhodes.

TABLE 20.2 *Saffrey's correlations between Theodore and the Philosopher from Rhodes*

Théodore d'Asiné	le «Philosophe de Rhodes»
L'Indicible	
L'Un, triade intelligible (*hen*)	1e hypothèse
La Profondeur intellective = l'Intellect	2e hypothèse
La Profondeur démiurgique = le *discursus*	3e hypothèse
La triade des Ames = les Formes des corps	4e hypothèse
La matière	5e hypothèse

Saffrey completes his case by offering two possible transcription errors that could have resulted in the words ὁ ἐκ τῆς ἀσίνης φιλόσοφος Θεόδωρος becoming ὁ ἐκ ῥόδου φιλόσοφος.

Should we believe him? The question matters for us because the only other highly plausible allusion to Theodore in Proclus' *Parmenides Commentary* draws on Theodore's work *On Names*.[19] So at stake is the question of whether we possess any evidence showing that Theodore had views about the structure of the *Parmenides*. This, in turn, matters because regarding the *Parmenides* as the key to understanding Plato's philosophy is characteristic of the Neoplatonic commentary tradition. Did Theodore receive Plato's dialogues in this way? Does he belong with Proclus' other Platonic Bacchants in this respect?

The desire to reduce the number of unknown Platonists populating the pages of Proclus' often cryptic *Parmenides Commentary* is a strong one. But in this case, I must recommend caution. It is not unreasonable to suppose that a completely inexpressible first principle should not be discussed in the system of hypotheses that make up latter part of the *Parmenides*. So Saffrey's shift of the right-hand column down one row seems to me relatively unproblematic. It is when we look more carefully at the glosses that he provides for Theodore's triads in T6 that I become more sceptical. With respect to third hypothesis, the case for equating the Demiurgic triad of Being, Life and Mind with the objects of *dianoia* is not obvious. Nor, I submit, is the identification of the psychic triad that Proclus describes in the *Timaeus Commentary* with the "corporeal forms" of the *Parmenides Commentary* entirely clear. For all that has been said thus far, Tarrant's speculation that the philosopher from Rhodes might be Thrasyllus seems to me just as likely.[20]

19 T9 = *in Plato. Parm. interprete G. de Moebeka*, 52.9–27 (Klibansky).

20 Tarrant (1993), 177 n.53. This assumes that it would not be anachronistic to attribute such speculations to Thrasyllus. See the article in this volume on the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides* and the question of its novelty and its authorship.

If this scepticism about the identity of the philosopher from Rhodes with Theodore of Asine is justified, then we cannot say that we have evidence for the centrality of the *Parmenides* to his reception of Plato. The case for Amelius' seems somewhat different. Here I think we can be confident that he at least had views about structure of the latter part of the Parmenides. Since this was a question that a Platonist in the tradition of Iamblichus and Proclus would be expected to address, he appears somewhat closer to that tradition than Theodore. But even in the case of Amelius, it appears that he drew conclusions in his interpretation of the dialogue that other Neoplatonists rejected.

IV Plato and Others

Apart from the centrality of the *Parmenides* to the Platonic corpus, another distinctive feature of the Neoplatonic commentary tradition is the desire to exhibit a confluence of wisdom between Plato and other sources of authority. Among these are the *Chaldaean Oracles*, Orphic texts, Homer and ideas that the Neoplatonists associate with Pythagoreanism. In many cases, an author's interpretation of Plato is confirmed by the fact that such an understanding reveals how Plato is in agreement with the other authorities. Proclus, in particular, often works hard to resolve apparent inconsistencies between Plato and the *Oracles*.

Amelius seems to refer to some of the same texts to confirm his understanding of Platonism. Thus we have seen already that he sought to align the three demiurges he took to be implied by the *Timaeus* 39e7–9 with the Orphic Phanes, Ouranos and Kronos (*in Tim.* I 306.10–14). The evidence is not so clear with Amelius' reference to the *Chaldaean Oracles*. At the very least we can say that Proclus pulls a quotation from fr. 33 of the *Oracles* in his discussion of the three demiurges at *in Tim* I 361.26–362.1. It is not entirely clear whether this is Proclus' observation or whether he is suggesting that Amelius himself sought to align his reading of the multiple demiurges of the Timaeus with deities of the *Oracles*. If he did, this would be unsurprising. After all, both Numenius and the city of Apamea are thought to be linked to the *Chaldaean Oracles*.[21] Moreover, Porphyry's testimony presents Amelius as a man much interested in matters mystical.

None of our evidence for Theodore definitively shows him attempting to establish correspondences between Plato's texts and the *Oracles* or Orphic texts.[22]

21 Athanassiadi (2005); Majercik (1998).

22 One possible exception may be Proclus, *in Tim.* II 154.4–9 = T 19 (Deuse). Here Proclus relates Theodore's views on the existence of two intellects prior to the soul and notes that this view "derives from the Persians through Porphyry. Or at least this is what Antonius, who was the student of Ammonius, reports."

What is most striking about the manner in which Theodore interprets Plato's thought is the specific nature of the Pythagorean number symbolism that he utilises. It is common enough for Neoplatonists of both the Athenian and Alexandrian schools to assume that one can elucidate Plato's texts by reference to number symbolism. The parallels between the *Theology of Arithmetic* (attributed to Iamblichus) and interpretations of mathematical concepts that appear in Plato's text are frequent. Thus Proclus reports Syrianus' interpretation of the whole numbers from which the soul is composed in the *Timaeus* (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 27) as symbolising the remaining, procession and reversion of different kinds of things.[23] Theodore sees universal significance in the number series too, but the associations are much more elaborate.[24] Thus he derives the visible cosmos from the soul by equating the double series (2, 4, 8) with the heavens and the triples (3, 9, 27) with the sub-lunary region. Further, different elements are associated with both whole numbers and ratios with geometric proportion (1, 2, 4) assigned to the element earth on two grounds. First, the similarity of *Gê* and *geômetrês* and, secondly, the fact that the other proportions are included in the geometric proportion just as all the elements are found on Earth. The latter is the kind of justification that Neoplatonists frequently offer. They will even sometimes reason from the similarities of words. However, nothing in their interpretive resources parallels Theodore's more adventurous moves.

> Lest one think that this number [sc. the soul's number] is lifeless, you will discover Life in the letters at each end, if you take the first heptad instead of the third. If, however, you posit the base number of the first letter and those subsequent to it you will see that the soul's life is intellectual. Take ζ ο ψ (i.e. 7, 70, 700). The circle [ο] is intermediate, being intellectual, because intellect is the cause of the soul. But the smallest term shows that the soul is a sort of geometric intellect because what joins the parallel lines is a straight line across the diagonal. (*in Tim.* II 275.23–31).

Let us first consider the way in which ψυχή allegedly manifests life. The letter ψ represents the number 700 in the Greek notation for writing numbers. This is the "third heptad" in the sequence 7, 70, 700. Now we are instructed to begin with the first heptad instead of the third. This is the number 7, represented in the Greek notation by ζ. If you combine this with the final letter of ψυχή you get ζη for life or living. This living soul is then argued to be a "geometric intellect". In the midst of the sequence of hetads of 7 (ζ, ο, ψ) we have the "ο"

23 Cf. *in Tim.* II 219.3–25. The reading that Iamblichus gives is similar; cf. II 215.5–29.

24 *in Tim.* II 216.25–217.3 = T22 (Deuse) part.

25 Plato, *Leg.* 898a8–10, *Tim.* 34a1–3; cf. and Proclus, *in Tim.* II 94.20–22.

which, of course, is the visible image of the motion of Intellect.[25] But this intellect is revealed to be a geometric one because of the *shape* of the letter corresponding to the first heptad. The relevant fact here seems to be that the capital form of the number corresponding to 7, Z, can be thought of as connecting two parallel lines. The path of the ecliptic describes a similar Z pattern joining the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. Moreover, the line of the ecliptic passes through the centre of the universe where the Earth, which has previously been associated with the geometric proportion, is located.

Generally speaking, it seems that Theodore regarded the correlations between letters in words and the use of those letters in writing numbers – that is, the techniques of psephy – as a legitimate source of interpretative insight. Moreover, the shapes of Greek letters themselves were also treated as grist for his interpretive mill.[26] Kalvesmaki argues persuasively for seeing affinities between Theodore's methods and those of Valentinian gnosticism.[27] The latter was the subject of criticism by the Christian theologians Irenaeus and Clement. While both these writers themselves indulged in some limited number symbolism in their readings of Scripture, they regarded the structuring principles behind the plurality of Aeons in Valentinian gnosticism as too much of a good thing. Similarly, Kalvesmaki argues, Iamblichus sought to place limits on numerological speculation in the Platonist tradition. His thesis is that Iamblichus stands to Theodore much as Irenaeus and Clement stand to the excesses of the Christian gnostics. It is important for our purposes that Iamblichus' criticisms of Theodore seem to come from a work known to Proclus called *Refutations of Amelius and his school and of Numenius*. Is there any evidence that this work was directed at Theodore's methods of interpretation and further that Amelius shared these methods?

With respect to the first question, the answer is clearly yes. Having reported Theodore's views extensively (*in Tim.* II 274.10–278.25), Proclus immediately follows this report with criticisms from Iamblichus' work against Amelius as if this covered Theodore as well (*in Tim.* II 277.26–278.25). Iamblichus first complains that the psephic method is arbitrary, since one might find similar things about other four letter words, like *sôma* or *mê on* which are unrelated to *psychê*. Second, the shapes of letters are arbitrary. In fact, Iamblichus insists that Z was written differently on ancient monuments. Third, Iamblichus complains that Theodore's arithmetical manipulations are arbitrary as well: "we could thus transform any number into any other by dividing, adding or multiplying."

26 Cf. *in Tim.* II 277.25–26 where Proclus describes his thoughts as ἀπὸ τῶν γραμμάτων καὶ τῶν ἐκφωνήσεων τὰς ἐξηγήσεις.

27 Kalvesmaki (2013).

So far as we can tell from the evidence, Amelius' interpretations of Plato's texts do not dwell too much on number symbolism, nor does Proclus attribute to him psephic techniques. His interpretation of the psychic numbers in the *Timaeus* (*in Tim.* II 213.8–214.4) is a little odd but roughly in line with the views of Iamblichus and Syrianus. It is odd in that he takes the salient question to be how these numbers reveal the manner in which the World Soul connects everything – including the gods! It connects to the gods by virtue of the 1, but to the daemonic genus by virtue of the 2 and the 3. The reasons offered for this are vaguely familiar from our discussion of Syrianus and relate to the stages of procession and reversion. The World Soul connects to human souls and exercises providence over them by virtue of the 4 or the 9, depending on whether the human souls are good (even) or bad (odd). Similarly, it connects to animals via the 8 or the 27, depending on whether the animal in question is domestic (better) or wild (worse). By the standards of Neoplatonic hermeneutics, this is nothing too unusual. Similarly, Amelius' exegesis of the *Republic*'s nuptial number is pretty tame. Consistently with his interpretation of the "perfect number" of the *Timaeus*, it is the period that it takes for all the heavenly bodies to come to their *apokatastasis* (Proclus, *in Remp.* II 30.6–24).

V Conclusions

The limited evidence available to us recommends the hypothesis that Proclus puts Amelius and Theodore together, not because both employed the same interpretive methods but because they accepted many of the same *conclusions*.[28] Thus both seem to have accepted that there are intellectual paradigms of particular things (*in Tim.* I 425.16–22 = Theodore T11). Furthermore, Proclus attributes to both of them the idea that the *Timaeus* contains three numerically distinct demiurges (I 309.14–20 = Theodore T12). But the use of psephic techniques on the part of Amelius is not attested. In this case, the

28 And even this may need to be contextualised. It is true that there are certain conclusions shared by Amelius and Theodore that Iamblichus, Syrianus and Proclus all reject. But these doctrinal commonalities don't seem to bind Amelius and Theodore more closely to one another than, say, other doctrinal commonalities bind Theodore closely to Porphyry. Indeed, if we think of the issue that creates the sharpest dividing line between Plotinus and the rest of the Neoplatonic tradition – the undescended soul – then we find that he and Theodore are fellow travellers on *this* crucial issue. Cf. *in Tim.* III 333.28–30 = Theodore T36 (Deuse).

absence of evidence is evidence of absence, since one would expect Proclus to condemn Amelius at the same time as he criticises Theodore had the former utilised psephy in his reading of Plato. After all, the two authors are regularly linked by Proclus. But Proclus does not usually suggest that Amelius is approaching Plato's text in a hermeneutically irresponsible manner, even when he thinks that Amelius has Plato wrong. In fact, Proclus is apt to regard Theodore and *Porphyry* as similarly arbitrary in the interpretive presuppositions that they bring to Plato's dialogues. At *in Tim.* III 63.30– he relates Porphyry's and Theodore's explanation for the differing speeds of the Mercury and Venus (*Tim.* 38d1–6). Both explain this by reference to whether the intellects associated with the planets revert directly upon Intellect or through intermediaries like Being and Life. Proclus regards these ideas as fanciful – these philosophers "working from their own personal suppositions' – and follows this with criticisms by Iamblichus (= fr. 70, Dillon) that centre on the artificiality and arbitrariness of reading these ideas into Plato's text. With regard to the methods he brings to interpreting Plato, Theodore is unique in his excessive Pythagorean number symbolism. If there is another Platonist whose methods resemble his own it is rather more Porphyry than Amelius. Amelius and Theodore seem to be grouped together rather by their acceptance of similar conclusions.

What, then, should we say about Proclus' and Iamblichus' tendency to associate both Theodore and Amelius with the thought of Numenius? It seems that Proclus himself is somewhat unsure about why Iamblichus' work, *Refutations of Amelius and his school and of Numenius*, is titled in this way. He says "such is the title he gives – whether he is ascribing Numenius' opinions to them or perhaps finding that they have written similar things concerning these matters, I am unable to say" (*in Tim.* II 277.28–278.1). Here too I think our very limited evidence points to similarities in their conclusions, but not necessarily similarities in their principles for the interpreting of Plato's texts. From a hermeneutic point of view, I think we should be cautious about positing any "Numenian school of Apamea", with a distinctive interpretive method, of which both Amelius and Theodore are representatives. I think it is fair to say that – so far as we can tell at least – none of the three take the same systematic approach to line by line exegesis of individual Platonic dialogues. One might speculate that their approach to Plato is a bit too intertextual for the followers of Iamblichus who made a discipline of the *skopos* of each dialogue. But apart from this somewhat free-wheeling attitude toward reading Plato, I think that there is little evidence for a distinctively Neo-Pythagorean methodology shared by all three. Our evidence suggests that Theodore's use of psephic methods in his

interpretation of Plato is unique to him. In this respect, he is truly an outlier in the Platonic tradition.

What we can say is that our principal source – Proclus – *knows* a lot more about Porphyry and Iamblichus than he seems to know about Amelius and Theodore. This situation would be explained if Proclus' knowledge of the philosophy of Amelius and Theodore – and perhaps of Numenius as well – is indirect and mediated through Porphyry and Iamblichus. It seems possible that it is the nature of our sources that create the impression of a particularly deep affinity between Amelius' and Theodore's reception of Plato.

CHAPTER 21

Plato's Political Dialogues in the Writings of Julian the Emperor

Dominic J. O'Meara

When Julian was made Caesar in 355 A. D., or perhaps somewhat later, when he was about to take over power as emperor late in 361, he replied to a letter which had been addressed to him by the prominent philosopher of Constantinople, Themistius.[1] Both letters are of a public nature: they do not concern private matters, but rather the important challenge arising with Julian's accession to political power. The moment is charged with drama: on the one hand, Themistius expressed his hopes for the way in which Julian would take up his new political responsibilities (and his desire to exert influence on Julian); on the other hand, Julian showed acute awareness of his own limited abilities and the immensity of the task which he must assume. It appears that in his letter (which is lost, Julian reporting on it in his response), Themistius had exhorted Julian to shake off the leisurely, easy life of philosophical study so as to follow the examples of Heracles and Dionysus in purifying the world of evil. Heracles and Dionysus were, Themistius had said, both philosophers and kings.[2] It thus looks as if Themistius had evoked, in his letter to Julian, one of Socrates' most extraordinary claims in the *Republic* (473c–d): that there will be no "cessation of evils for humanity" until philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers. This is not the only time that Themistius had recourse to Plato's idea of the union of philosophy and kingship, of philosopher-kings. He used the idea elsewhere, in addressing himself to other rulers.[3] We might suppose then that Themistius' reference to the ideal of the philosopher-king,

1 On the question of the dating of Julian's letter to Themistius, see the survey in Schramm (2013), 308 n.32, to which one might add Bouffartigue (2006) and Swain (2013), 55–57, who both argue for the earlier dating. I cite Julian's works in the edition published by Bidez, Cumont, Lacombrade, Rochefort (1924–64). See the new critical edition by H.-G. Nesselrath (2015). An English translation can be found in Wright (1913–23). Swain (2013), 160–79, provides an English translation of Julian's letter to Themistius.

2 *Ad Themistium* 1, 253a–254a.

3 Themistius, *Orationes* 1, 46,7–9 ; 8, 162,20–4.

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on the occasion of Julian's accession to power as Caesar or as emperor, is little more that a rhetorical commonplace, often used in the encomiastic speeches addressed to rulers in Late Antiquity.

The case of Julian is different, however. He is indeed a philosopher, or rather a committed student of philosophy. Themistius can write to him as one philosopher writing to another. And Julian is to become a ruler. Themistius' reference to Heracles and Dionysus as philosopher-kings evokes a very distant, mythical past. However the pagan rhetor Libanius appears to be alluding to a more recent, historical episode, the intervention of Plato in Syracuse (described in the *Letters* VII and VIII attributed to Plato), in a letter which he addressed to Julian in 362, when the emperor was in Antioch, preparing his fatal expedition against the Persians. Libanius here describes Julian as the king "whom long ago Plato had sought and somehow found, late".[4] The compliment is elegant. If recalling in the first instance the Sicilian episode when Plato seems to have sought to educate the son of the tyrant of Syracuse in philosophy, it also makes Julian into the philosopher-king sought by Plato and found, many centuries later, in Julian. The topic of the philosopher-king, however bandied about in the rhetoric of Late Antiquity, takes on, in Julian's case, a particular relevance: here, indeed, is a philosopher who has become king.

For pagan intellectuals of the period, Julian's accession to power had a particular importance in that he represented the hope that the course of history could be changed, the progressive Christianization of the Empire reversed and a return made to the old Hellenic (pagan) tradition. This is indeed what Julian undertook to do, once he became emperor. But his vigorous efforts to bring about administrative, judicial, educational and religious reform were cut short by his sudden death on the campaign against Persia in 363. His reign could be regarded as a brief moment, a rare opportunity for a change for the better as expressed by the ideal of the philosopher-king. If the short-lived reign could later be seen with nostalgia in this way, Platonizing intellectuals did not give up Plato's hope. About forty years later, Synesius would advocate the ideal of the philosopher-king for the benefit of the young emperor Arcadius and his court. And Boethius, more than a century later, would describe his own political career as inspired by the ideal.[5]

But to what extent did Julian himself see his political vocation as that of a Platonic philosopher-king? To what extent does Plato's idea of a philosopher-king affect Julian's way of conceptualizing his own political

4 Libanius' letter is printed as no. 97b in Bidez's edition of Julian's letters.

5 I discuss the cases of Synesius and Boethius in my article "Lady Philosophy" (2017).

responsibilities? In this chapter, I would like to approach these questions by discussing the following points: (I) Julian's way of seeing Plato in the context of a certain conception of philosophy and its history; (II) Julian's knowledge and use of the dialogues of Plato; (III) Julian's use and interpretation of Plato's political dialogues, in particular the *Republic* and the *Laws*; and finally (IV) Julian's use of these dialogues as seen in the context of Neoplatonic philosophy. My discussion will concentrate mostly on point III, whereas the other points will be covered more briefly.

I Julian's Image of Plato

Julian tells us in a letter that on his travels he took with him the books of only two authors, Plato and Homer.[6] If this suggests the importance for Julian of Plato as a source of philosophical inspiration, it does not mean that Plato as a philosopher stood alone, so to speak, in Julian's eyes. When Julian refers by name to Plato, it is sometimes to introduce an authoritative quotation, as in the cases to be discussed below (III), but sometimes, also, to situate Plato in a group of philosophers to whom he gives an authoritative status. Thus Plato is named with Pythagoras and Aristotle as forming a group which advocates the goal of human life as being that of "assimilation to god (*homoiôsis theô*) as far as possible".[7] These philosophers represent one truth, *one* philosophy, the goal of which, as Julian describes it, is that shared in common by Late Antique Platonists. Aristotle can fit in with this group of philosophers in that he and Plato are essentially in agreement (an example of this agreement will be discussed below). However, the agreement is reached on Platonic terms: Aristotle is in some respects deficient in comparison with Plato and subordinate to him.[8] Finally, we can add to the group of true philosophers the figure of Iamblichus, mentioned several times by Julian as even equal to the other members of the group.[9] Julian also names, in company with Plato, Iamblichus and his immediate predecessors, Plotinus and Porphyry.[10]

This way of seeing Plato, situating him in a select group of the representatives of true philosophy which begins with Pythagoras, includes

6 *Epistula* 80.

7 *Ad Cynicos* 4, 185ab; 6, 185c (Julian adds the Stoics to this group; however, he criticizes Stoicism in *Ad Themistium* 3, 255d); 16, 197d; *Epistula* 89b, 300d.

8 *Ad matrem deorum* 3, 162c–d

9 *Ad Heraclium* 12, 217b; *Ad Solem* 26, 146a.

10 *Ad Heraclium* 16, 222b.

Aristotle (with qualifications) and is carried on by more recent Platonists such as Plotinus, corresponds to the view of the history of philosophy which had been developed by Iamblichus. According to Iamblichus, philosophy is knowledge, both theoretical and practical, which is of divine origin and is revealed to humankind for the purpose of saving it from evil and misery in its life in the material world, bringing it to share in a higher, divine life, by assimilation to the divine. This knowledge is revealed by a select company of divinely-inspired souls, those of Pythagoras and Plato and (to some extent) Plato's student, Aristotle.[11] Julian seems to share essentially in the same vision of philosophy and its true representatives, among whom he included Iamblichus himself. As a student of Aidesius in Pergamum, Iamblichus' student, and of Aidesius' students, Julian would have learnt from them to see Iamblichus in the same light as Iamblichus had seen Pythagoras and Plato.

II Julian's Knowledge and Use of Plato's Dialogues

Did Julian bring all of Plato's dialogues with him in his portable library? Did he read all, or just some of the dialogues, complete, or just parts of some dialogues? Did he read Plato as excerpted in anthologies or as summarized in handbooks? If Julian's view of Plato is influenced by Iamblichus' interpretation of Plato, is his reading of Plato filtered by later, in particular Iamblichean, readings of Plato? Quite apart from receiving instruction from members of Iamblichus' school, we know that Julian was eager to obtain Iamblichus' writings.[12] Julian had also received training from professors of rhetoric in Athens who themselves made use of Plato: could some of Julian's use of Plato be mediated by the rhetorical texts which he had studied?

Jean Bouffartigue, who has done the groundwork on Julian's use of Plato, lists 81 quotations from Plato in Julian.[13] In examining these quotations, Bouffartigue shows that not all of them are taken directly from Plato's dialogues. Some quotations may derive from anthologies, some may be transmitted by the rhetorical tradition. It also emerges that Julian has a preference for some of Plato's dialogues, or for parts of some dialogues. The critical analysis of Julian's quotations from Plato leads Bouffartigue to the following results as regards the dialogues which can be identified as having been read directly by Julian: they are *Alcibiades 1*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Menexenus*, *Republic*,

11 See O'Meara (1989), 35–40, 96–97.

12 *Epistula* 12.

13 Bouffartigue (1992), 170–97.

Laws, *Timaeus*. Of these the dialogues best represented in Julian's writings are: *Timaeus* (16 quotations), *Republic* (14), *Laws* (11), *Phaedo* (7). And, as regards the *Laws*, Julian seems to use just a portion, going from Book IV, 709b to Book V, 730e.[14]

The precise identification of specific passages taken from Plato in Julian or used by him is, in some cases, uncertain and such lists as those provided by Bouffartigue could probably be reduced, if we are in a sceptical mood, or, on the contrary, extended. So deeply has Julian taken to heart and assimilated Plato and his Neoplatonist interpreters that his culture, in this regard, can hardly be overestimated. Below I will suggest, for example, that Plato's *Statesman* should probably be added to the list of dialogues read by Julian. Bouffartigue points out that his list of preferred dialogues in Julian does not correspond to the curriculum of Platonic dialogues established by Iamblichus, which included neither the *Republic* nor the *Laws*.[15] But this curriculum provided a basic reading list, to which diligent students could add further dialogues, as did Proclus when he read, on the subject of political virtue, not only the *Gorgias* (the prescribed text on this subject in Iamblichus' curriculum), but also the *Republic* and *Laws*, to which he added Aristotle's *Politics*.[16] So too could Julian, as a passionate student of philosophy, read widely in Plato and more freely, going beyond the framework imposed by a school curriculum.

III Julian's Use of Plato's Political Dialogues

In the following I would like to consider more specifically the use Julian made of Plato's political dialogues, the *Republic* and the *Laws*, of course, but also the *Menexenus* and the *Statesman*, with a view to seeing how Julian could understand his own calling, as Caesar or as emperor, in the light of Plato's texts. Bouffartigue has described the portion of Plato's *Laws* quoted by Julian, spanning Books IV and V, as "a manual for the philosopher-king" which Julian could keep at his bedside. Of all Plato's dialogues, Bouffartigue claims, the *Laws* left the most direct and powerful echoes in Julian's writings, at least the portion of the *Laws* which had been selected by Julian.[17] What then did Julian find in Plato's *Laws* and how does this compare with what he read in other dialogues concerning politics? I will proceed by taking Julian's writings very roughly in

14 Bouffartigue (1992), 192–93, 195.

15 Bouffartigue (1992), 195.

16 See O'Meara (2003), 64–68.

17 Bouffartigue (1992), 193.

chronological order, surveying the way in which Julian introduces Plato's political dialogues in these writings.[18] I will then compare this reading of Plato with the way in which these same dialogues were seen in the philosophical school tradition founded by Iamblichus.

In the first speech composed by Julian in praise of the emperor Constantius II (in 356/7), while extolling, as the rhetorical genre requires, the education and virtues of his cousin, he refers to Plato's proposal, in the *Republic* (467d–e, 537a), that children should be educated in warfare by being brought to the scene of battle. Contantius' father, Constantine the Great, did even better, Julian says, by not actually exposing the young man to the dangers of battle, providing for his education in warfare and courage by having him observe the wars between Rome's enemies in Gaul.[19] The compliment to Constantius and his father is contrived and not persuasive.[20] In the second speech of praise written for Contantius II, about a year later, while praising Constantius' military exploits, Julian insists that the military leader or king should always honour the divinity and, in this connection, quotes a phrase from Plato's *Menexenus* (247e7–248a3) saying that a man should depend on "himself" (*eis heauton*), rather than on others, as regards all that which concerns happiness.[21] Julian applies Plato's words to the case of the king, in particular, and alters its wording slightly: if Plato's text is something sacred and ancient, Julian avers, yet he thinks that he is interpreting Plato correctly when he reads the expression "himself" in the phrase as meaning "god". As Julian explains in this and in the following chapter, the "self" in us is intellect and soul, the god in us, which cannot be affected by what others do to us.[22] Julian finds the doctrine that our self is our intellect, our soul, whereas the body just belongs to us, in Plato's *Laws*.[23] So should the true king subordinate his rule to god, in whom the divine in him participates. Julian introduces these exegeses of Plato's text with some diffidence: he is aware that he is transgressing thereby the rhetorical conventions of the genre. Yet he comes back again, later in the speech,[24] to Plato's *Laws* in

18 Of course it is not possible, within the limits of this chapter, to discuss all of the passages in Plato used by Julian and I will confine myself to some significant examples.

19 *Ad Constantium I* 9, 11d–12b.

20 See Bouffartigue (1992), 185, who also discusses Julian's use of Plato's *Republic* on the topic of the education of future rulers in *Ad Constantium II*.

21 *Ad Constantium II* 15, 68c.

22 On the Neoplatonic inspiration of Julian's interpretation see Bouffartigue (1992), 352; De Vita (2011), 202–17.

23 Bouffartigue (1992), 193, refers us to *Leg.* V, 726a–729a, whereas Bidez in his edition refers to *Leg.* XII, "959ab etc".

24 *Ad Constantium II* 24, 80d–81a.

speaking of virtue as the treasure of the soul. In giving of this treasure to others, soul does not diminish it in herself. In this connection Julian quotes the words of the Athenian Stranger: "no gold, under the earth or on it, is as valuable as virtue" (*Laws* V, 728a4–5).

Julian's two speeches of praise for Constantius II flatter his cousin the emperor (who was also a constant threat to Julian's life) by evoking the ideals of rulership traditional in such rhetorical set-pieces, inspired in particular by Dio of Prusa and also adopted by Themistius.[25] We should not confuse such ideals, expressed in fairly hollow rhetoric, with Julian's serious and different conception of his *own* rulership, as he presented it in the response to Themistius I have mentioned above.[26] Faced with Themistius' call that Julian measure himself against philosopher-kings of a mythical past, Heracles and Dionysus, Julian protests that he, Julian, is not by nature an exceptional person.[27] Should one encourage people who are less talented and capable to do politics? Socrates is said, according to Julian, to have discouraged such people from engaging in politics.[28] Julian then points out that such affairs are determined, not only by virtue and correct choice, but also by chance (*tuchê*): chance rules the actions of those who live the political life.[29] The rule of chance in the domain of practical life is affirmed by Plato in a passage in the *Laws*, which, Julian says, had been pointed out by Themistius himself.[30] Julian then quotes two extracts from the *Laws* (IV, 709b7–c1; 713c4–714a8). In the first passage Plato writes that god, together with chance, opportunity (*kairos*) and rational expertise (*technê*), governs all human affairs.[31] In the second passage which Julian quotes from the *Laws*, the governance of men, in the age of Cronos, given the inadequacy of

25 See Perkams (2008), 108–17; O'Meara (2003), 207.

26 Julian's letter to Themistius has often been discussed. See, example, the more recent analysis provided by Bouffartigue (2006), Schramm (2013), 306–25 (very thorough, with account taken of the Neoplatonic background), Chiaradonna (2015). Athanassiadi's description (1981), 94, of the *Ad Them.* as an "momentary aberration" in the context of Julian's thought is criticized by Chiaradonna (2015), 161. See also Perkams (2008), 122–3

27 *Ad Themistium* 2, 254b. Julian's emphasis on his own natural, moral and intellectual limitations should not be used in order to disqualify the seriousness and depth of his commitment to (Neoplatonic) philosophy. See, for example, Perkams (2008), 107. Julian's limitations are indeed great, in comparison with the divine perfection required of Plato's ideal philosopher-king (see below at n.35).

28 2, 255c. See Xenophon, *Memorabilia* III, 6.

29 4, 256c.

30 5, 257d.

31 On the significance of this passage from the *Leg.* in Neoplatonic philosophy, see O'Meara (2003), 134–6.

human nature to the task, was assumed by beings superior in nature, demons. So now should we imitate the divine, in political rule, "calling 'law' the disposition of intellect". Intellect, for Julian, we remember, is the divine in us, whereby we participate in the transcendent god.

Julian quotes, a little later,[32] Aristotle's *Politics* (III, 15, 1286b22–27) as showing Aristotle's agreement with Plato with regard to the superhuman nature that is (in principle) required of a king. Aristotle also speaks, Julian indicates, of a king "according to the law", a "servant and guardian of the laws".[33] This rule of law is the rule of god and intellect. Plato and Aristotle therefore agree (*homologein*)[34] that kingship, the monarchical rule over others, requires that the king should be superior to others in nature and habit (*epitêdeusei*); that such a person is not easy to find[35]; and that one must adhere to laws based on intellect, on "what is by nature the just", transposed here below "from above" (*ekeithen*) as far as possible.[36]

A little later, Julian comes back to Themistius' insistence that Julian give up the closeted life of philosophical study and espouse the practical life of the philosopher-king.[37] Themistius had referred, it appears, to Aristotle in support of the idea that the life of action is to be preferred, quoting the phrase "the architects of fine action", i.e. kings, according to Themistius. However Julian points out that Aristotle does not actually use this phrase (Aristotle speaks of "architects by means of reasoning of external actions", *Politics* VII, 3, 1325b22–23) and that Aristotle can be understood as advocating something other than what Themistius claims. Julian explains that "architects" refers, not to people who actually act themselves (*autourgous*) and execute (*ergatas*) political actions, but to legislators and political philosophers who act as regards thinking and instruct others as to what to do.[38] Julian is making use, I believe, of the description in Plato's *Statesman* (259cd, e8) of political science as an "architectonic" science, which does not execute tasks (*ergatikos*), but rules and directs the actions of subordinate skills. (Aristotle also speaks of "political science" as architectonic in *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 1, 1094a26–28.) The actions of Julian will be subordinate to the political philosophy and legislation which

32 7, 260d.

33 7, 261a. Aristotle, *Pol.* III, 16, 1287a3 and 21–22.

34 8, 261d–262c

35 See Plato, *Rep.* VI, 491b, 496bd, 498d–499d; *Plt.* 301bd. I do not think that the Greek text of Julian here requires supplementation.

36 This appears to be a reminiscence of *Rep.* VI 501b1–4.

37 10, 263c.

38 10, 263d–264a.

direct his actions. What this will mean, concretely, is that Julian will solicit the company and advice of philosophers,[39] in particular members of the Iamblichean school such as the pupils of Aedesius and Julian's former teachers Maximus of Ephesus and Priscus.[40]

Chance may have brought Julian to power. Julian does not have the natural and intellectual superiority which would entitle him, he believes, to be king (12, 266c). We feel his reluctance to undertake the heavy tasks that await him. But he accepts his destiny, nevertheless, and appeals for god's support.

A text written later, in 262, when Julian had become emperor, throws further light on the mission which Julian sees himself as having to fulfil. Here, Julian invents a mythical story[41] in which he describes a dark and vicious world filled with ignorance, impiety, greed, murder, chaos, evil, the reign of Constantine the Great and his sons. Julian is led up from this world by the god Hermes to the vision of the gods. There he is instructed in rulership and sent by the god Helios, on Zeus' command, back to be king of men, to save them from their miserable condition. Julian has the promise that, once he has carried out his mission, he will be able to return to the vision of the gods. Julian's myth integrates images and myths taken from various sources,[42] including the myth in Plato's *Protagoras* (see 322c) and the image of the cave in Plato's *Republic*, in which the philosopher ascends from the darkness of error and ignorance of the prisoners in the cave to the light of the sun, the Form of the Good, then returning (reluctantly) to the cave to bring back the knowledge thus acquired above.[43] In the *Hymn to the Sun*, written later, when Julian was in Antioch, he quotes (5, 133a) from this part of the *Republic* the phrase about the sun as being the offspring of the Form of the Good (508b12–c2), which Julian also names the One. It would seem thus that Zeus, in Julian's myth, stands for the Form of the Good, the One, and that it is in obedience to the command of Zeus that Julian, suitably instructed in rulership by Helios and Athena, must assume his imperial responsibility.

In Antioch, before leaving for Persia, Julian returns again to Plato's *Laws*, referring to a teacher who had read Plato's work with him. The passage which Julian quotes (*Laws* V, 730d2–e2) prescribes that one not only be just in oneself,

39 See Plato, *Plt*. 259ab.

40 On these see Elm (2012), 90–96. Athanassiadi (1981), 65, 119 detects the use of Plato's *Statesman* in Julian's words about the king's choice of collaborators in *Const. II*, 90cff., but she does not provide precise textual evidence for this.

41 *Ad Heraclium* 22, 227c–234c.

42 See Schramm (2013), 326–32.

43 *Rep*. VII, 514a–517d (and see also above n.36).

but also prevent injustice in others. Julian's teacher had recommended this as concerning individual behaviour, not foreseeing that Julian would become king and that the prescription would also apply to Julian's actions as king.[44] In a second passage, Julian paraphrases *Laws* 729b5–c1, which prescribes the virtues of shame and moderation.[45]

IV Conclusion

If Julian sees his rulership in 362 in the light of the descent of the philosopher-king in Plato's *Republic* to the cave of politics, this does not mean that he had changed his mind and that he now considers himself to be Plato's philosopher-king. The myth he recounts illustrates in general his mission as a philosopher who is called to involvement in political action, not his specific status in this involvement, as a philosopher-king or as a ruler subordinate to political and legislative knowledge. Whatever his natural, moral and intellectual limitations, his mission to rule is required by a cosmic providential plan determined by transcendent divine causes, in particular by Zeus (the Good, the One) and by subordinate divinities, Helios, Athena and Hermes.[46] Rather than being a philosopher-king, Julian sees himself as the servant and guardian of law, acting in accordance with a political philosophy and a legislation which require the contribution of philosophical advisors. Thus his position as ruler corresponds more to the rule which is described as subordinated to law in Plato's *Statesman* and in the *Laws*. Plato's *Laws* also fits better with Julian's emphasis on the importance of piety, of god as the measure of all things (*Laws* IV, 716c). The disastrous political consequences of the impious (Christian) rule of Constantine the Great and Constantius II must be reversed by a return to public piety. Public religion is an important part of the organization of the model state of Plato's *Laws* and it is an essential part of Julian's programme for political reform.

It would not be adequate, however, to see Julian as simply selecting from Plato's dialogues those parts which best suited his situation. Julian is deeply influenced by his education in Neoplatonic philosophy and this also affects

44 *Misopogon* 25, 353d–354a. On the question of the identity of the teacher to whom Julian refers see Bouffartigue (1992), 19–25.

45 *Misopogon* 25, 354b. Athanassiadi (1981), 217–18 finds in Julian's description of Antioch (26, 355bc, 358bd), the use of Plato's account (*Rep.* VIII, 563be) of the excessive liberty which makes democracy into the second last stage in the series of corrupt constitutions ending with tyranny.

46 On Julian's metaphysical theology, see the full account provided by De Vita (2011).

his approach to Plato. We have seen above how Julian interprets the "self" as being soul and intellect, the divine part in us whereby we can share in transcendent divinity. True happiness is found in the contemplation by intellect of transcendent principles. The affairs of the body (and these include political matters) concern what is entrusted to us, our body, not our selves: they are of subordinate value.[47] Piety and the other virtues, in particular justice, are important, not only as regards human well-being in this world, but also as regards the return of the soul to a transcendent contemplative life. Life, here below, should imitate divine life as far as possible, as a stage in the assimilation to god.[48] These Neoplatonic doctrines (themselves an interpretation of Plato) underlie Julian's reading of Plato. His interest in particular in Plato's *Laws* can also be seen in this context. On the subject of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, the Late Antique Neoplatonic curricular programme saw the former dialogue as concerning a best state not limited (or compromised) by any given conditions (such as topographical constraints or the character of the citizens), whereas the latter concerns a state which is limited by certain given conditions.[49] The latter case is obviously that which relates to Julian's situation, when he was called upon to take up political office.

47 See O'Meara (2014), 473–4.

48 See O'Meara (2014), 477–8.

49 See O'Meara (2014), 475.

CHAPTER 22

Plato's Women Readers

Crystal Addey

I Introduction

Although it is not well-known, women were members of almost every philosophical school in antiquity, including the Epicurean community, the Cynic movement, the Neoplatonic schools of late antiquity, all of which included female philosophers, and, if the relevant evidence is reliable, Plato's Academy and the Pythagorean communities.[1] Admittedly, women appear to have been in a minority in these philosophical schools (according to available evidence), less numerous than their male counterparts, but their presence is significant. This chapter will examine the historical evidence for women reading Plato's texts in antiquity and for the presence of female philosophers within the Platonic tradition, from the fourth century BC through to the sixth century AD. Thus, this chapter represents one of the first historical examinations of the entire range of women engaging with Plato's works in antiquity. Many later female philosophers within the Platonic tradition were priestesses and prophetesses as well as philosophers; in this respect, Plato's Diotima acted as a crucial role model for these women. However, male philosophers were also sometimes

1 Women in the Epicurean community: D.L. 10.23, 25; Hipparchia and the Cynics: D.L. 6.96–98; Pomeroy (1975), 136–7; women in Plato's Academy: cf. below; Nails (2006), 6; women within the Pythagorean communities: D.L. 8.42–43; Iamblichus, *VP* 36.267 (lists 17 of the most famous Pythagorean women, implying that there were more). The main exception (aside from Aristotle) is Stoicism, which did not seem to include women in philosophical practices although Musonius Rufus (fr. 3.1–7 = Stob. 2.31.126) argued that women should study philosophy because they have been given the same reasoning power as men by the gods. Cf. Wider (1986), 22, 26; Pomeroy (2013), 44. Drafts of this chapter were presented at research seminars of the Scottish Hellenic Society and the Philosophy Society at St Andrews, and the Department of History, Politics and Philosophy, Manchester Metropolitan University: I thank all audiences for helpful feedback. I also thank Tim Addey, Gillian Clark, Stephen Halliwell, Antti Lampinen, Victoria Leonard, Tomasz Mróz, Suzanne Stern-Gillet and Eleonora Zeper for reading and commenting on this chapter, and the editors of this volume for their helpful advice and patience. I wish to dedicate this chapter to my mother, Averil Addey.

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characterised as prophets or as exhibiting oracular qualities in antiquity, so this role was not unique to women within the Platonic tradition.[2]

Plato's attitude towards women is complex and difficult to ascertain: methodologically, it can only be reconstructed from comments scattered throughout the Platonic corpus. Plato's overall message seems to be that the soul is immaterial, eternal and gender-less; only human bodies are different. Thus, the souls of men and women can equally study philosophy; education is vital and should be the same for both sexes.[3] This approach is frequently gleaned from Socrates' proposals concerning the roles of women within the ideal *polis* in *Republic* V (451c–466c): he claims that men and women differ only in their reproductive functions (*Rep*. 454d–e).[4] Natural talents are distributed alike among both genders; consequently, the ideal state should select women, as well as men, to act as Guardians or "philosopher queens": women should be educated, trained and employed in the same areas as men – gymnastics, music and war, as well as philosophy.[5] In Plato's *Meno* (71d–73c) Socrates challenges the conventional difference between male and female virtue and seeks what they have in common, concluding that all humans become good by acquiring justice and moderation; thus, the virtues of both genders are identical. However, the comments scattered through the Platonic corpus do exhibit a certain tension concerning the nature of women. The equal roles allotted to women and men in the ideal *polis* are mentioned in the *Timaeus* (18c), and yet later we hear that men who have been cowardly and wicked within their life will be re-incarnated as women as the first step downwards to rebirth as animals.[6]

Although the approach(es) towards women evident within the Platonic corpus may exhibit ambiguity, Plato places one of his most important and powerful speeches into the mouth of a woman, Diotima, whom Socrates claims was his teacher (*Symp*. 201d–212c). We do not know if Diotima is real or fictitious: the name is attested from Boeotia in the early Classical period.[7] If Plato invented Diotima, he possibly made her Mantinean because of the resemblance of the place-name to *mantis,* "seer" and its cognates, particularly *mantikē*, "divination".[8] The name "Diotima" could mean "honoured by Zeus"

2 Plutarch, *Virtues in Women* 243b3–10; Addey (2014a); (2014b), 51–72.

3 Plato, *Rep.* 452a; *Leg.* 770c–d, 796c, 804d–e, 813e–814c; *Tim.* 18c; Garside Allen (1975), 135.

4 Halliwell (1993), 149.

5 *Rep.* 452a1–4; 455d7–e1; Okin (1977), 307–21; O'Meara (2003), 83–86. Cf. *Leg.* 770c–d, 780a–781e, 796c, 804d–e, 833c–d; Saunders (1999), 480.

6 *Tim.* 91d; Garside Allen (1975), 131; Baltzly (2013), 403.

7 Dover (1980), 137.

8 Dover (1980), 137; Hunter (2004), 81.

or "honouring Zeus".[9] There is a widespread assumption that Diotima is the one named character whom Plato definitely invented because of (1) the lack of mention of Diotima in the Socratic tradition, and (2) her speech sounds thoroughly Socratic and contains allusions to previous speeches in the work.[10] However, one might expect that a student might sound like his or her teacher, especially one whose teachings they endorse (*Symp.* 212b1–4). Furthermore, although there is no mention of Diotima within the (extant) Socratic tradition, many Socratic texts are fragmentary or entirely lost.[11] The closest parallel is that of Aspasia who *is* mentioned in the Socratic tradition but she particularly received attention from contemporary male authors because of her controversial relationship with Pericles.[12] Plato clearly created the speech of Socrates-Diotima, as he created the speeches of all characters in the *Symposium*, but this does not necessarily entail that he created the figure Diotima herself; that "Socrates might have learned *erōs* from Diotima is neither refuted nor confirmed by Plato".[13] Socrates in Plato's *Meno* states that he learnt many

9 Dover (1980), 137.

10 Cf. Nehamas and Woodruff (1989), xii, citing *Symp.* 205d–e, 212c; Gill (1999), 77–79, citing also *Symp*. 204c referring to 200a, and 208d alluding to 179b–180b. As Nails (2002), 137–8, notes, even taking this into account, we need not assume that Plato contrived Aristophanes' whole speech *ex nihilo*. Cf. Bury (1909), XXXIX; Rosen (1968), XXXI; Nussbaum (1986), 177; Rowe (1998), 173; Hunter (2004), 81; Sheffield (2006), 66, n.33; Cooksey (2010), 65–66, who tend to treat Diotima as fictional. Rowe (1998), 4, and Dover (1980), 10, 137, note Socrates-Diotima's discussion of the Forms; however, this has no bearing on Diotima's fictionality given that Socrates, a known historical figure, mentions the theory in several of Plato's works. Proclus cites Diotima and seems to treat her as a historical figure: *In Alc*. 63.12–64.1; 64.8–10; 67.7–9; 69.14–70.1; 70.13–15; 72.12–13; 73.10–12; *PT* 1.23, p.105.5–7; 1.25, p.111.20; 1.26, p.117.2–7; 1.27, p.121.1–2; 6.11, 53.15; 6.19, 89.22.

11 We know titles of approximately 200 works written by Socrates' followers: less than 45 survive, by just three authors – Plato accounts for at least 27 – precision is impossible because of disputes over the authenticity of certain works; Xenophon for 14 and we have two pieces by Antisthenes; some further short fragments of Aeschines and other Socratics survive but nothing substantial: cf. Boys-Stones and Rowe (2013), vii.

12 Aspasia, who was a member of Socrates' circle, is the only other woman attributed with a speech in Plato and is often seen as the prototype for Diotima: *Menexenus* 235e–236d; 249c–e; Scholium to *Menexenus* 235e = Aeschines 66; Aristophanes, *Ach.* 526–39; Plutarch, *Pericles* 24.1–3; 24.6; 32.1; 32.3; Aeschines 67 in Boys-Stones and Rowe (2013), 236; Boys-Stones and Rowe (2013), 233; 634; Brisson (1989); Henry (1995); Nails (2002), 59–60; Stadter (1989), 237–8. Of the 12 fragments or passages which mention Aspasia, two-thirds (8 in total) focus on or mention her association with Pericles: cf. Boys-Stones and Rowe (2013), 234–41.

13 Nails (2002), 137.

things "from priests and priestesses who have studied so as to be able to give a reasoned account of their ministry."[14]

Diotima, who is characterised as a wise prophetess, priestess, and an initiator into the mystery cults, is introduced by Socrates with a comment about the benefits of her ritual expertise (*Symp*. 201d3–5).[15] Socrates also claims that divination is needed to understand her meaning (*Symp*. 201d; 206b). Diotima's discourse consistently links philosophy with love (*erōs*), formulating *erōs* as a daimon midway between gods and humans.[16] Her discourse is replete with terminology from the Eleusinian mysteries: its structure imitates the pattern of these mysteries.[17]

II Methodology

The methodological problems for women reading Plato's texts in antiquity are the same as for all aspects of women's lives in antiquity: there is an extreme lack of extant writings written by women and we seldom hear their views directly.[18] Most of the surviving evidence is written by the male educated elite, often within the biographical tradition, and frequently consists of vague generalisations.[19] Extant female writings are often plagued with problems of authenticity and lack of context.[20] The paucity of relevant evidence has additionally been affected by processes of textual transmission and later views of women both within the medieval Christian tradition of the Latin West and the Arabic tradition in the East. This is evident in the case of Hypatia, since some of

14 *Meno* 81a10–b1: Οἱ μὲν λέγοντές εἰσι τῶν ἱερέων τε καὶ τῶν ἱερειῶν ὅσοις μεμέληκε περὶ ὧν μεταχειρίζονται λόγον οἵοις τ' εἶναι διδόναι. Cf. also 81a5–6.

15 Cf. *Leg.* 642d; McPherran (2006), 90–91; Nichols (2009), 59; Sheffield (2006), 67; Corrigan (2004), 111.

16 Diotima's formulation of this theory and its application to ritual would be influential in the later Platonic tradition: cf. e.g., Proclus, *In Alc.* 63.12–64.1; 64.8–10; 67.7–18; 69.14–70.1; 70.13–15; 72.12–13; 73.10–12.

17 Cf. *Symp.* 201d–212c; Burkert (1987), 70; Riedwig (1987), 5–14; 17–22; Wilson Nightingale (2005), 173–8; McPherran (2006), 92. In presenting the prophetess Diotima as teacher, Plato was possibly influenced by Pythagoreanism: a famous anecdote about Pythagoras claimed that he took his doctrines and wisdom from the Delphic priestess Themistoclea: cf. Aristoxenus fr. 15; D.L. 8.8; 8.21.

18 Blundell (1995), 10.

19 Pomeroy (1975), x–xi; Just (1989), 1–12, 113; Henry (1995), 4, 14; Blundell (1995), 10–11; Clark (1996), 3; Brulé (2003), 1–4.

20 Deslauriers (2012), 343–5.

her writings were later attributed to male writers through processes of textual transmission.[21] It is therefore difficult to assess the intellectual activities of women in antiquity objectively and fairly.

Some have argued that ancient women philosophers were anomalies, few in number and exceptions to the rule.[22] However, we know from both literary and epigraphic evidence that there were many female philosophers in antiquity, especially from the Roman imperial period onwards, although it remains impossible to determine their precise numbers.[23] A connected methodological issue relates to how we categorise female philosophers and their activities; this issue is based on how we define "philosophy" and exactly what counts as "philosophical activity". Several scholars have excluded women engaged in certain intellectual activities because they do not consider these to count as "philosophy".[24] However, in terms of defining "philosophy" and the "philosopher", it seems best to adhere to a simple definition: "to call oneself *philosophos* in antiquity was to declare a love of wisdom and an eagerness to study things human and divine".[25] If a closer characterisation of "philosophy" seems necessary, the tripartition of philosophy into logic, physics and ethics does not help in categorising female philosophers or in excluding certain women from "philosophy"[26] since it is extremely problematic to attribute specific philosophical activity in logic, physics or ethics to particular women when we know so little

21 Plant's (2004), 1–9, anthology of women writers from ancient Greek and Roman cultures lists 55 attested female writers from the seventh century BC through to the sixth century AD. The canon of Greek authors has some 3,200 entries but we have the names of only about 100 Greek and Roman female writers (up to AD 600).

22 See Hawley (1994), 70–71; Urbano (2013), 246–7.

23 Cf. Barnes (2002), 293–6, 303–6, for a representative sample of epigraphic evidence.

24 Cf. e.g. Deslauriers (2012), 344. However, see Jenkins (2013), 86–89, 91–93; Haslanger (2008), 213, 217; Lloyd (1984) on the gendering and masculine coding of philosophy and the "gendered academy". Lloyd (1984) points to the powerful role played in philosophy historically by the "man of reason", the embodiment of objectivity, good sense and neutrality. Yet such conceptions may be somewhat anachronistic when applied to antiquity, particularly to the late Platonic tradition, where conceptions of reason: (1) may have been much broader than modern and contemporary constructions – since reason was often envisaged as beyond or between the categories of subjectivity and objectivity; (2) were often closely linked with the personal development, way of life and "receptivity" of the philosopher, and (3) were based on notions of the power of reason to link the thinker to superior metaphysical hypostases experientially – thus exhibiting qualities of inter-connection rather than neutrality *per se:* cf. Addey (2014a), 171–213.

25 Barnes (2002), 293–306.

26 *contra* Wicker (1987).

of the sum total of their intellectual activities during their entire lifetime. It is important not to exclude from the category of "philosopher" women who wrote about women's domestic affairs from a philosophical perspective, especially when women were often confined to domestic roles in antiquity. Many of the post-classical Pythagorean treatises present the well-run household, healthy upbringing of children and modesty as important manifestations of the harmony of the cosmos, and of virtue and philosophical principle.[27]

A further problem relates to the inextricable connections between Plato's philosophy and Pythagoreanism and the difficulty in disentangling female roles in both, if such disentanglement is appropriate. Many women associated with Pythagoreanism seem to have read Plato or share names or associations with women associated with the Platonic tradition.[28] Plato was clearly influenced by Pythagoreanism and his views on the equality and education of both genders were influenced by Pythagorean practice. There was a tradition in antiquity that Plato's mother, Perictione, was a philosopher linked with Pythagoras; a Pythagorean work is attributed to her although this may be later and pseudonymous.[29] A consistent conflation of these traditions is to a certain extent inherent within the sources.

III Women in Plato's Academy

There is evidence that there were female philosophers among Plato's pupils within the Academy, established around 387–383 BC.[30] Diogenes Laertius (3.46) lists many of Plato's pupils and concludes: "… among them were also two women, Lastheneia of Mantinea and Axiothea of Phlius, the latter of whom wore men's clothes, as Dicaearchus reports."[31] Although Diogenes is a late

27 Clark (1989), XVII; (2007), 170; Pomeroy (1984), 70; Harper (2013), 117–25.

28 Harper (2013), 117.

29 Thesleff (1965), 142; Hawley (1994), 73; Pomeroy (2013), 44, 48, 51, 56.

30 Anon., *Proleg.* 4.25–26 (p.11 Westerink); Apuleius, *De Plat.* 1.4; Olympiodorus, *In. Alc.* 2.147–9 (pp.5–6 Westerink); Dorandi (1989); Nails (1995), 213; (2006), 6; 11.

31 σὺν οἷς καὶ γυναῖκες δύο, Λασθένεια Μαντινικὴ καὶ Ἀξιοθέα Φλειασία, ἣ καὶ ἀνδρεῖα ἠμπίσχετο, ὥς φησι Δικαίαρχος = Dicaearchus, fr. 44, ed. Wehrli (1967) = fr. 50 ed. Mirhady (2001), 54–55. Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 4.19, 122.2, T4 in Dorandi (1989), 62, names Lastheneia of Arcadia and Axiothea of Phlius as Plato's students. Riginos (1976), 184, notes that the detail that Axiothea dressed as a man is also recorded in the *Index Herculanensis* Col. VI.27 (p.37 Mekler), which links both women with Speusippus: cf. D.L. 4.2. Dorandi (1989), 57–58, and Goulet (1989), 691, argue that Axiothea may be recognised as the unnamed

source (third century AD), this testimony is explicitly based on the authority of Dicaearchus, a fourth century polymath who had written a work entitled *On Lives* treating Plato, among other philosophers; his *floruit* was approximately 320–300 BC and so he was writing about 20 or 30 years after Plato's death; furthermore, he had direct links with Plato as a pupil of Aristotle.[32] Therefore the authority of Dicaearchus considerably strengthens the reliability of Diogenes' account. If we combine this evidence with the fact that women *were* pupils and members of most of the major contemporary philosophical schools, and if we also take into account Plato's discussion of women's philosophical potential and their equal roles and capabilities in the *Republic* and the *Laws,* it seems almost certain that there were indeed female students within the Academy. Themistius (*Orations* 23.295c) also records the story about Axiothea wearing male clothing when she joined Plato's Academy, adding that she was inspired to join the school by reading one of his works, generally taken to refer to the *Republic*.[33] This remarkable account of the protreptic effect of the *Republic* in inspiring Axiothea toward the philosophic life may have an ironic twist given that she is said to be inspired by the dialogue which maintains the equality of women and yet she felt that she had to dress as a man in order to join the Academy and be accepted among Plato's students.[34] However, her dressing in male clothing may be related to her adherence to the social protocols of classical Athens, rather than indicating lack of acceptance of women within Plato's Academy. The anecdote also relates to important themes in Plato's approach towards gender, since it accords with the notions that the soul is gender-less and that the body is merely clothing for the soul.

The stated provenance of these female philosophers also merits consideration: Axiothea's home, Phlius, marks the outer framework and setting of Plato's *Phaedo* and therein is said to be the home of a group of Pythagoreans.[35]

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young girl described as a pupil of Plato, then of Speusippus and Menedemus of Eretria, in a biographical fragment (second-third century AD) contained in *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 3656 (published by P.J. Parsons) in Cockle (1984), 47–50.

32 Cf. *OCD* s.v. Dicaearchus; White (2001), 195–8; Riginos (1976), 184 and n.13; Nails (1995), 215 n.4; Wehrli (1967), 55, suggested that the two women were taken from the Pythagorean tradition and adopted by the Platonic, basing this on the mention of Lastheneia of Arcadia as a Pythagorean in Iamblichus, *VP*. 36.267. As Riginos (1976), 184, n.13, states, it is much more probable that the Pythagorean Lastheneia is taken from the Platonic tradition given that she is mentioned as early as Dicaearchus. Cf. Dorandi (1989), 60; Goulet (1989), 691; Goulet and Dorandi (2005), 82.

33 Riginos (1976), 184.

34 Riginos (1976), 184.

35 Themistius, however, makes Axiothea an Arcadian: cf. Riginos (1976), 184.

This may indicate Axiothea's possible involvement with local Pythagoreans, illustrating the close interconnections and shared philosophical commitments of Plato's circle and the Pythagoreans. However, it may rather point towards confusion between the traditions. Lastheneia's home, Mantinea, is the provenance attributed to Diotima and the connection here is intriguing but mysterious: does it suggest an explicit connection between the two female figures? Given the similarities between "Mantinea" and "*mantikē*", the attribution of this birthplace to Lastheneia is intriguing in this respect too. However, any suppositions on the nature of the connection are speculative. The anecdotes about Axiothea and Lastheneia rehearse important themes in Platonic notions of gender. Overall, it seems safe to conclude tentatively that women *were* pupils in Plato's Academy and played an active role in this philosophical setting, although information about their lives, activities and possible writings is almost non-existent.

IV Women Reading Plato in the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial Periods

Women had greater access to education from the Hellenistic period onwards: some schools were endowed and provided free education to both genders; literacy, especially among aristocratic women, was not uncommon.[36] This may have had a significant impact on female access to philosophical activities and texts: certainly, more evidence is available from this period onwards that women were familiar with Plato's works. The so-called pseudo-Pythagorean letters and treatises, many of which are addressed to women and seemingly written by women, represent such a case. However, authorship of these works is extremely problematic and they may be pseudonymous: they are attributed to famous women within the Pythagorean tradition, such as Theano, Pythagoras' wife or daughter and follower. Yet the content and stylistic features of the letters often imply later dates of composition, implying that they could not have been written by these famous Pythagorean women.[37] Some have attributed authorship to men, claiming that they wrote them to recommend certain types of ethical

36 Wider (1986), 25–26; Pomeroy (2013), 45–46, 56.

37 Most of the letters are dated to the fourth or third century BC at the earliest (some are dated later, up to the second century AD): hence they cannot go back to Theano and the other famous Pythagorean women they are attributed to, who would have lived in the late sixth and early fifth centuries BC: cf. Bourland Huizenga (2013), 30, 41 n.44; Deslauriers (2012), 346; Dillon and Polleichtner (2009), XV.

conduct to women.[38] Sarah Pomeroy's (2013) argument, that they were written by Neopythagorean women who were named after their Pythagorean spiritual ancestors, seems most convincing, although the authorship remains inconclusive.[39] However, whether women or men actually composed these letters, they show that the phenomenon of women writing letters regarding philosophical issues was considered possible (and was not unheard of) during this era.[40] These letters seemingly represent an ancient curriculum for the philosophical training of women, with the authors serving as exemplary older female teachers and the named recipients as their younger female learners.[41]

Most of the extant letters relate to women's roles as wife, mother and head of the household, encouraging the traditional roles expected of aristocratic women during the Classical and Hellenistic periods. However, several suggest that women were reading Plato's works. For example, Theano's letter to Rhodope suggests that both women were female philosophers who read Plato:

> Theano to the philosopher Rhodope. Are you disheartened? But I too am disheartened. Are you grieved that I have not sent to you the book of Plato, the one which he has written called "*Ideas* or the *Parmenides*"?[42]

Theano has a copy of Plato's *Parmenides* which she had previously arranged to send to Rhodope. It may be relevant that a surviving fragment of another work attributed to Theano, *On Piety*, discusses Pythagorean number theory, claiming that Pythagoras did not state that things come into being *from* number, but

38 First claims of male authorship: Bentley (1699), 304, (who did not believe that women participated in the Pythagorean movement at all) cited by Pomeroy (1984), 65, 191 n.132. No clear evidence points towards male authorship and scholars who have supported this position have not clearly stated their reasons. Claims of female authorship: Wider (1986), 40; Waithe (1987), 59–64; Lambropoulou (1995), 122–34; Pomeroy (1984), 64–71; (2013), 49–53. Cf. Bourland Huizenga (2013), 78–84, who argues that the question of whether the pseudepigraphers were male or female is unanswerable; Lefkowitz and Fant (1992[2]), 163; Pomeroy (1975), 133–4.

39 Pomeroy (2013), 49–53.

40 Pomeroy (2013), 46.

41 Bourland-Huizenga (2013), 30.

42 *Theano to Rhodope* in Thesleff (1965), 200 (translation is my own): Θεανὼ Ῥοδόπῃ φιλοσόφῳ. Ἀθυμεῖς σύ; ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὴ ἀθυμῶ. δυσφορεῖς ὅτι μήπω σοι ≤ἔπεμψα≥ τὸ Πλάτωνος βιβλίον, ὃ οὕτως ἐπιγέγραπται "Ἰδέαι ἢ Παρμενίδης." The dating of this letter is uncertain but may be second century BC or later: cf. Thesleff (1961), 22, 113–4, 106. Eight letters in total are attributed to Theano, of which seven address female correspondents.

in accordance with number and that the primary order is in number.[43] Whoever wrote the letter to Rhodope, it shows that it was plausible for women to read and actively engage with the works of Plato, including the demanding, metaphysical or logical text of the *Parmenides*, and to share copies of these works, implying discussions of Plato's philosophy among women.[44]

Perictione's treatise *On Wisdom* has a philosophical tone, describing wisdom as the highest activity of human beings (men *and* women), making it possible for them to perceive the principles of all and the divine.[45] Perictione's *On the Harmony of a Woman* (fourth or third century BC) claims women can attain harmony through traditional virtues such as moderation, self-control, and avoidance of luxury – this text may be written by Plato's mother and almost certainly has a different authorship from *On Wisdom*, attributed to Perictione II.[46] This treatise is largely traditional and adheres to typical Greek gender roles, setting out women's duties towards the gods, her parents, her husband and her home.[47] More promisingly, it alludes to the idea of a philosopher-queen, stating that the harmonious women often act beautifully towards cities as ruler (*On the Harmony of a Woman* 689.2–3).

Plutarch's work also shows that women were familiar with Plato. Plutarch's *Consolation to his Wife* (*Moralia* 608–612) is a letter of condolence to Timoxena, composed shortly after the death of their young daughter while he was away. This touching letter contains several hints that Plutarch and Timoxena discussed philosophy and tried to adhere to its ethical guidelines in their daily lives. Elsewhere (*Advice to the Bride and Groom* 145a) Plutarch refers to a letter written by Timoxena (to Aristylla) about the love of ornament, suggesting his wife's education, literacy and her own use of philosophical-ethical advice to instruct other women. The Pythagorean letters seem to have influenced Timoxena's letter and these two works of Plutarch.[48] Since Plutarch was a Platonist philosopher, it seems likely that he and his wife *would* have read Plato's works together or at least discussed his ideas. Several echoes of philosophical commonplaces indicate Timoxena's philosophical education: for example, Plutarch addresses her: "You have often been told that happiness depends on right thinking, which results in a stable frame of mind ..." (*Consolation*

43 Thesleff (1961), 22; Pomeroy (2013), 66–68.

44 cf. Plant (2004), 69; Pomeroy (2013), 46, 93–94.

45 This treatise, dated to the third or second century BC, has been described as Platonic: Thesleff (1961), 17, 115; Pomeroy (2013), 110.

46 Thesleff (1961), 17, 113; Macris (2012a), 231–2; Pomeroy (2013), 69–70.

47 Pomeroy (2013), 63–64.

48 Pomeroy (2013), 56–57; Tanaseanu-Döbler (2013), 136 n.61.

to his Wife 611a4–5).[49] This idea derives at least from Aristotle, although it can probably be traced to Plato's works too.[50] Plutarch structures the letter in order to show Timoxena's intellectual abilities, using quotations from Homer, Euripides and Theognis, and an allusion to Aesop.[51] He also makes use of logic, implying that she can follow it: for instance, he uses three rhetorical questions on the illogicality of moderating joy and happiness only to surrender to grief (4.609a–b).[52] The same chapter, with its emphasis on moderating grief so that it does not increase further, draws on *Republic* III 387e–388a. Perhaps the strongest references to philosophy come when Plutarch reminds his wife about different views of the soul and its relation to death, as well as their shared initiation into the mystery cult of Dionysus (10.611d–e). This passage contains a cluster of allusions to Plato's philosophy, indicating that Plutarch and Timoxena shared discussion of Plato's dialogues. The reference to those who think that the soul suffers dissolution after death alludes to Epicureanism, while the exhortation to regard the soul as immortal clearly derives from Plato's *Phaedo*. The idea that the soul comes back into the world and has successive births is a summary of the idea of the transmigration of the soul, drawing on *Republic* X and the *Phaedo*. The idea that the soul can become stale in its recollection of the world beyond in old age draws on the theory of recollection set out in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*.

The impression that Plutarch and Timoxena read and discussed Plato together is strengthened by the content of *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, which begins and ends with the importance of philosophy for couples in order to achieve a successful marriage (Plutarch *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 138b–c). Plutarch emphasises the importance of Hermes, and thus of *logos* as reason, discourse and communication in marriage, and makes it clear that the treatise will be primarily based on philosophical advice. He exhorts Pollianus to use philosophical demonstrations and arguments to improve his character, and to discuss philosophy with his wife, including philosophical argument. He concludes this advice by stating (rather patronisingly) that such studies will keep a woman away from absurd behaviour (145c). More promisingly, he concludes his treatise by addressing Eurydice directly, exhorting her to familiarise herself with the sayings of the wise, to remember what she has learned from him as

49 Ὅτι μὲν γὰρ ἐξ ὀρθῶν ἐπιλογισμῶν εἰς εὐσταθῆ διάθεσιν τελευτώντων ἤρτηται τὸ μακάριον…

50 Aristotle, *EN* 1.10.1101a6–8; Seneca, *To Helvia* 5.1. Cf. Hawley (1999), 126.

51 Homer, *Iliad* 22.126 and *Od.* 19.163 quoted at Ch. 2; Euripides, *Phaethon* F785 quoted at Ch. 3; *Bacchae* 317–18 at Ch. 4; *Andr.* 930 at Ch. 7; Theognis 427 quoted to sum up the soul image at 10; Aesop at 5. Cf. Hawley (1999), 123 and n.41.

52 Hawley (1999), 126.

a girl and to have proud and splendid thoughts of herself as one who shares in philosophy, the fruit of the Muses (*Advice to the Bride and Groom* 145e4–6; 146a6–10). Plutarch was Eurydice's teacher before she married, and her education included philosophy.[53] He advises her to treat famous philosophical women, such as the Pythagorean Theano, as role models for her life, encouraging her to behave as a philosopher.

Plutarch addressed and dedicated another work to Clea, who had requested this work to show that virtue is the same in men and women (*Virtues in Women* 242f5–243a2); here, Plutarch and Clea herself are clearly influenced by and follow Plato. This work includes 27 biographical stories illustrating the loyalty and bravery of various individuals or groups of women. Clea is also the addressee of Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris*, where we learn that she was a priestess (351e10, 352c2–8). Both works show the level of education and philosophical sophistication that women such as Clea embodied. *On Isis and Osiris* is one of Plutarch's most ambitious philosophical works and assumes Clea's knowledge not only of the Isis cult and myth, but of basic philosophical concepts (e.g. 351e6–f2, 354b13–c6, 354f9–13, 370d2–371a5, 373e7–f5). Plutarch's explicit statements and the literary and intellectual sophistication of the two treatises indicate Clea's impressive level of education.[54]

In Plutarch's works we see that female education, especially Plato's philosophy, was a living reality for Plutarch's circle of friends; Plutarch also insists upon and lives by the importance of sharing philosophy within marital relationships and the family environment.[55] Moreover, Clea is a priestess as well as a philosopher and suggests the importance of Plato's Diotima as a paradigmatic model for Platonist female philosophers. Overall, while the picture which emerges from Plutarch and the post-classical Pythagorean works is one in which female readers of Plato are concerned with specific ethical issues related to gender, the evidence also shows that they are familiar with Plato's dialogues in general.

V Women Reading Plato in Late Antiquity: Neoplatonism

In late antiquity, all of the Neoplatonic schools included female philosophers. Neoplatonic philosophers took notice of and defended Plato's ideas (*Rep.* V) about the role of philosopher queens and the equal capacities of women for

53 Puech (2000), 349.

54 Stadter (1999), 173–4.

55 Stadter (1999), 174–5.

philosophical pursuits.[56] Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic* insists on the common nature and shared capacity for virtue and for ruling amongst men and women.[57] Olympiodorus agrees that women do not differ from men at all except for bodily differences: consequently, women can live an equal, even superior, political life to that of men; he goes even further than Plato in stating that a woman might show superiority to men by displaying great courage and dying for her *polis*.[58] Plato's Diotima seems to have been particularly important within Neoplatonism, influencing the way that male philosophers constructed the ideal representation of philosophical women, and possibly acting as a direct role model for female philosophers.

1) *Women in the Circle of Plotinus and Porphyry*

Plotinus' philosophical school in Rome was based in the household of Gemina: here, Plotinus held public lectures open to visitors and informal members, and more sustained philosophical sessions with the "inner circle" of his devoted followers. In both, we know that texts of Plato were read out and discussed (*V. Plot.* 13; 15.2–6).[59] Of the fourteen regular, dedicated members of the school mentioned by Porphyry, three were women – Gemina, her daughter of the same name, and Amphiclea, the latter of whom married Ariston, Iamblichus' son. Porphyry describes all three women as having a great devotion to philosophy, but says little of them beyond this (*V.Plot.* 9.1–6).

In his *Commentary on the Harmonics of Ptolemy*, Porphyry cites the work of Ptolemaïs, a female musical theorist from Cyrene who had written a work entitled *The Pythagorean Principles of Music*.[60] Porphyry does not treat Ptolemaïs as unusual and does not comment on her gender.[61] It is unclear whether Ptolemaïs was a philosopher who read Plato's works as well as a musical theorist, but the title and fragments of her work indicate her interest in Pythagoreanism, although she seems to prefer the approach of Aristoxenus in her discussion of different positions on harmonic theory.[62] However, she is

56 O'Meara (2003), 83.

57 Proclus, *In Remp.* 237.28–238.17; 248.4–16; 249.16–21. Cf.. Baltzly (2013), 403–24 for a detailed examination of Proclus' attempt to reconcile Plato's comments about women in his *Rep.* and *Tim.* commentaries; Tanaseanu-Döbler (2013), 142.

58 Olympiodorus, *In Gorg.* 18.9.1–6. Cf. O'Meara (2003), 84–86.

59 O'Meara (2003), 14.

60 Ptolemaïs' dates are uncertain but her work must have been written between the 4th century BC and the first century AD: cf. Barker (1989), 230; Plant (2004), 87–89; Macris (2012b), 1717–18.

61 Barker (1989), 230; Pomeroy (2013), 42, 51.

62 Barker (1989), 230; Gibson (2005), 141.

generally considered to be a Neopythagorean.[63] Ptolemaïs' knowledge of the canonic theory indicates that she had a firm grasp of mathematics.[64]

Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella* also comprises important evidence of women studying Plato's philosophy. Marcella was Porphyry's wife, a woman whom he had married late in life when her husband (a friend of Porphyry's) died.[65] Porphyry (*Marc.* 3.37–8; 3.50–51; 3.44–6) speaks of his admiration for Marcella's "natural aptitude for the right philosophy" and her esteem for truth above all, which he claims is one of his more divinely inspired reasons for marrying her; he states "I summoned you to my own way of life, sharing philosophy and pointing out a doctrine consistent with that life," by which he refers to Plato's philosophy. In fact, the whole letter is a plea to her for self-sufficiency and independence in pursuing philosophy while he is away (*Marc.* 4.58–9). In keeping with the focus of his own and Plotinus' thoughts about the nature of philosophy as the path to becoming like a god, Porphyry writes of philosophy as an ascent to the gods, urging Marcella "to remember the divine doctrine by which you were initiated into philosophy" (*Marc.* 6.105–35). Here, he draws on Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, using a similar terminology of initiation into divine mysteries to describe the philosophic path. Porphyry explicitly discusses Plato's teaching of the intelligible and the sensible in encouraging Marcella to ascend within herself to the intelligible; he also discusses the relationship between soul and body, and the role of the virtues in the philosophical life in a Platonic manner (*Marc.* 10.183–6). A wide range of Neoplatonic metaphysical notions are evident within the letter, demonstrating that Marcella was a philosopher who was familiar with Plato's works.

2) *Women in Iamblichus' Circle and among His Philosophic Successors*

Iamblichus' school in Syria almost certainly included female philosophers: he addresses one of his letters on "self-control" (*sôphrosynê*) to Arete (*Letter* 3: *to Arete*), whose name ("virtue") made her a fitting recipient for a letter on this topic.[66]

63 Plant (2004), 87; Pomeroy (2013), 42, 95–96.

64 Pomeroy (2013), 95.

65 Wyttenbarch (1822), 43, suggests that Marcella was the daughter of a senator Marcellus Orrontius, a disciple of Plotinus in Rome. Cf. Goulet (2005), 258; Tanaseanu-Döbler (2013), 138.

66 Athanassiadi (2013), 18–19, characterises Arete as a quarrelsome person whom Iamblichus wrote to in order to encourage moderation. Although the problems with her neighbours might suggest this interpretation, Julian's positive characterisation of her points in a different direction. I would rather think Iamblichus writes to Arete on this subject in honour of her name, given the importance of names to Iamblichus.

She is almost certainly identical with the Arete named in Julian's *Letter to Themistius*, who had problems with her neighbours in Phrygia; Julian saves her from these troubles by appearing in person to assist her (259d). Although the identity of the two women is uncertain, the way in which Julian speaks of her with great reverence, calling her "that wonderful women", suggests her elevated status within Neoplatonic circles.[67] The date of Julian's provision of assistance to Arete is unclear but probably took place in the early 350's when she would necessarily have been quite an old woman.[68]

Whether Arete was a member of Iamblichus' philosophical school is uncertain, but extremely probable given that many of Iamblichus' letters are addressed to his own pupils.[69] At the very least, the letter indicates that she read some of the works of Plato, since it is replete with allusions to (assuming knowledge of and familiarity with) a range of Plato's dialogues.[70] Fragment 1 discusses the tripartite nature of the soul, naming the spirited element, the faculty of desire and reason, alluding to *Republic* IV. Fragment 2 cites the *Phaedo* (83d) and *Phaedrus* (254b) and fragment 7 contains an allusion to the *Symposium* (188a). Moreover, fragments 2 and 3 (lines 1–2) allude to the Neoplatonic "purificatory" level of virtue in accordance with the schema established by Plotinus (and elaborated by Porphyry), since they discuss the elimination of desires (ἀπάθεια, associated with purificatory virtue) rather than the moderation of them (μετριοπάθεια, associated with political virtue).[71]

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67 Bidez (1919), 39; Caujolle-Zaslawsky (1989), 349; Dillon and Polleichtner (2009), XVIII, n.8; 62. In the conclusion of the letter (266d8–267a2), Julian also states that he needs assistance from "… you philosophers by all means in your power, since I have proved myself your leader and champion in danger" which may relate to the earlier allusion to Arete, the only reference made by Julian in the letter to assisting others in times of danger, which further strengthens the likelihood of Arete being a philosopher.

68 Bidez (1919), 39; Dillon and Polleichtner (2009), XVIII n.8.

69 Caujolle-Zaslawsky (1989), 349; Denzey Lewis (2014), 279.

70 Dillon and Polleichtner (2009), 62.

71 Political virtue associated with μετριοπάθεια: Plotinus, *Enn.* I 2 [19], 1.16–21; I 2 [19], 2.14–20; I 2 [19], 7.17–19, 22–26; Porphyry, *Sent.* 32.6–8; Brisson (2005), 629, 631; purificatory level of virtue associated with ἀπάθεια: *Enn.* I 2 [19], 3.11–21; I 2 [19], 5.3–23; I 2 [19], 11–15; I, 2 [19], 6.23–28; I 2 [19], 7.17–19, 22–27; Porphyry, *Sent.* 32.17–18; Marinus, *Vit.Proc.* 21.1–9; Damascius, *In Phd.* 1.140–41; Olympiodorus, *In Phd.* 8.2.9–12. Cf. Dillon and Polleichtner (2009), 62–63; Finamore (2012), 120–22. Cf. Finamore (2012), 113–32, for a reconstruction of Iamblichus' hierarchy of virtues (citing Olymp., *In Phd.* 8.2.9–12; 8.3.5–6; Damascius *In Phd.* 1.140–41 [citing Iamblichus' lost work *On Virtues* (Περὶ ἀρετῶν) at *In Phd.* I.143–44]; Marinus, *Vit.Proc.* 21.1–9), which adds a superior level to Porphyry's four levels – Hieratic or Theurgic virtue – and two lower levels – Natural

Since "purificatory" virtue was superior to political virtue within the Neoplatonic hierarchy of virtues because it was considered to free the soul from the body and so to lead more directly to the goal of becoming like god (*Tht.* 176b–c) than political virtue (which enables us to control our lower souls and so contributes towards divinization in a preparatory sense), Iamblichus would only address a philosopher this way which further suggests that Arete was indeed a philosopher in her own right.[72] In addition to his letter to Arete, Iamblichus' *de Vita Pythagorica*, a work intended to inspire students of philosophy, features Pythagorean women prominently (*VP* 36.267, 54–7, 48, 132).[73]

Eunapius mentions his cousin Melite, who married Iamblichus' pupil Chrysanthius, although the extent to which she was involved with philosophy is unclear, and Maximus' wife, whom Eunapius claims was so profound in her knowledge of philosophy that she made Maximus look as though he did not even know the alphabet (*VS* 477).[74]

Among Iamblichus' philosophic circle was Sosipatra. She chose to marry Eustathius, one of Iamblichus' pupils, and prophesied the number and destinies of their children. However, her philosophical and mystical talents had emerged long before this, according to Eunapius who consistently characterises her as spiritually and intellectually superior to various men, including her husband, father and several male philosophers.[75] Her gifts are evident from childhood when she was educated by Chaldaean prophets who initiated her into Chaldaean mysteries.[76] She is presented as a theurgist and prophetess, with the ability to know the future and events from a distance (similar to the

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and Ethical – below political virtue; however, Iamblichus' approach to the parameters of the political and purificatory levels follows Plotinus and Porphyry closely: Iamblichus, *Letter to Arete* fr. 1 implicitly refers to political virtue since it discusses the correct arrangement of reason, the spirited element and the faculty of desire in the soul according to the proper ranking of each (in political virtue, reason regulates the *thumos* and the faculty of desire); fr. 4 also alludes to political virtue.

72 Purificatory virtue leads more directly to divinization than political virtue: *Enn.* I 2 [19], 1.21–28; I 2 [19], 3.1–2, 6–11; I 2 [19], 3.19–23; I 2 [19], 7.22–31; Porphyry, *Sent.* 32.18–21. Cf. also *Enn.* I 2 [19], 5.1–3; I 2 [19], 7.11–13; Brisson (2005), 629; Finamore (2012), 113. Freeing the soul from the body in order to "become like a god", the goal of philosophy: *Tht.* 176b–c; Plotinus, *Enn.* I 2 [19], 1.3–6 (citing *Tht.* 176b–c); I 2 [19], 3.11–21; I 2 [19], 5.1–3; I 2 [19], 6.2–3; I 4 [46], 4; I 8 [51], 7.12–17.

73 Cf. Clark (1989) XVI–XVIII; (1993), 132.

74 Clark (1993), 133.

75 *VS* 466–71; Penella (1990), 60–61; Clark (1993), 133; Iles Johnston (2012), 101; Tanaseanu-Döbler (2012), 132; (2013), 128–30.

76 *VS* 468; Pack (1952), 198–204; Penella (1990), 59; Addey (2014a), 2; Denzey Lewis (2014), 276.

bi-location reported of Pythagoras and Iamblichus' prophetic ability to know events from a distance: cf. *vs* 458–9).[77] Her words are described as oracular and she is characterised as a "divine woman" throughout the biography.[78] She read many philosophical, poetic and rhetorical works, and established her own philosophical school in Pergamon:

> In her own home, Sosipatra held a chair of philosophy that rivalled his [Aedesius, Iamblichus' successor], and after attending the lectures of Aedesius, the students would go to hear hers; and though there was none that did not greatly appreciate and admire the accurate learning of Aedesius, they positively adored and revered the woman's inspired teaching (Eunapius, *vs* 469).[79]

Sosipatra's inspiration, ἐνθουσιασμός, refers to the theurgic nature of her teaching and this passage may imply that the more advanced students studied with her after preliminary study with Aedesius. Theurgy was a kind of ritual practised by many Neoplatonists: it aimed for the soul's assimilation to and union with the divine and used divination, among other ritual methods.[80] Unfortunately, nothing survives of Sosipatra's philosophical writings, although it is very clear that she must have read many or all of Plato's works. Eunapius depicts her presenting an inspired discourse on the nature and descent of the soul, after first refuting various arguments so that it is clear that she is not merely possessed as an ignorant vehicle of some greater force but has philosophical erudition as well as divine inspiration.[81] It is especially striking that Sosipatra combines rigorous philosophical erudition with her roles as prophetess and theurgist. Her training by Chaldaean prophets links her with the *Chaldaean Oracles*, a (now fragmentary) set of mystical, oracular utterances, held in the highest esteem by Neoplatonists since they were considered co-extensive with theurgy; the books which the Chaldaeans left for Sosipatra

77 Cf. Denzey Lewis (2014), 274, 277.

78 *vs* 467–70; Penella (1990), 50; 56–59; Tanaseanu-Döbler (2013), 124; Denzey Lewis (2014), 278–9; Addey (2014a), 2.

79 καὶ ἀντεκάθητό γε αὐτῷ φιλοσοφοῦσα κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῆς οἰκίαν ἡ Σωσιπάτρα, καί, μετὰ τὴν Αἰδεσίου συνουσίαν, παρ' ἐκείνην φοιτῶντες, οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις τὴν μὲν ἐν λόγοις ἀκρίβειαν Αἰδεσίου <οὐ> περιηγάπα καὶ συνεθαύμαζεν, τὸν δὲ τῆς γυναικὸς ἐνθουσιασμὸν προσεκύνει καὶ ἐσεβάζετο. Cf Penella (1990), 53, for the problematic chronology of Eustathius' death in Eunapius' narrative.

80 Addey (2014a).

81 *vs* 470; Clark (1993), 133; Tanaseanu-Döbler (2013), 131; Urbano (2013), 266–7.

may have been the *Chaldaean Oracles*.[82] Eunapius' portrayal of Sosipatra associates the female philosopher with both Socrates and Plotinus (*VS* 469).[83] The configuration of philosophical and prophetic gifts evident in the portrayal of Sosipatra is typical of the late Platonist philosopher.[84] In this respect, Plato's Diotima clearly acted as a paradigm for Eunapius' portrayal of Sosipatra; the female philosopher may well have embraced the "philosopher, prophetess and theurgist" role(s) as part of a self-understanding that makes reference to Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*. The centrality of the *Symposium* here would make sense in relation to this dialogue's penultimate place in the first cycle of dialogues within the Iamblichean canon, while the *Republic* was considered an optional extra (cf. Anon. *Proleg.* 26).[85]

3) *Women in the Athenian School: Asclepigeneia*

The main female philosopher that we hear about within the Athenian School (fifth and early sixth centuries AD) is Asclepigeneia, daughter of Plutarch of Athens – the founder of the Athenian School.[86] Marinus describes Proclus' proficiency in theurgy and states:

> … from Asclepigeneia, the daughter of Plutarch, he learned the invocations and the rest of the apparatus. For she alone preserved the rituals, and the whole process of theurgy, handed on to her from the great Nestorius by her father (*Vit. Proc.* 28.10–15).[87]

Asclepigeneia received her theurgic training from her father and from Nestorius, who was also a seer and the hierophant of the Eleusinian mystery cult.[88] Asclepigeneia is presented here as the expert theurgist and priestess in the Athenian School.[89] Like Sosipatra, Asclepigeneia must have been an extremely

82 Pack (1952), 203; Penella (1990), 60; Majercik (1989); Urbano (2013), 258; Addey (2014a), 2, 8–10.

83 Addey (2014b), 51–72.

84 Fowden (1982); Clark (1993), 130; Addey (2014a).

85 Dillon (1973), 264–5.

86 Saffrey (1989), 625.

87 καὶ γὰρ ταῦτα παρειλήφει, καὶ τὰς ἐκφωνήσεις καὶ τὴν ἄλλην χρῆσιν αὐτῶν μεμαθήκει παρὰ Ἀσκληπιγενείας τῆς Πλουτάρχου θυγατρός. παρ' αὐτῇ γὰρ καὶ μόνῃ ἐσῴζετο ἀπὸ Νεστορίου τοῦ μεγάλου ὄργια καὶ ἡ σύμπασα θεουργικὴ ἀγωγὴ διὰ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῇ παραδοθεῖσα.

88 Nestorius: cf. Addey (2014a), 54, 280 n.181. Cf. Marinus, *Vit.Proc.* 29.3–27, for Proclus' curing of Asclepigeneia's granddaughter; see Saffrey (1989), 625–6.

89 Saffrey (1989), 625–6; Denzey Lewis (2014), 179, argues that she may have instructed Hypatia in theurgy too.

proficient philosopher in order to have become an expert theurgist, since the practice of theurgy presupposes the study of philosophy, both prior to and in tandem with ritual practice. Her transmission of the invocations and ritual procedures to Proclus, which she had received from her father, entails female to male transmission of ritual and philosophical expertise (similar to that of Sosipatra) modelled on Diotima's bestowal of initiatory knowledge to Socrates in the *Symposium*.

4) *Women in the Alexandrian School: Hypatia*

Turning to the Neoplatonic school in Alexandria, we encounter one of the most famous female philosophers of antiquity. Hypatia, daughter of the mathematician Theon who was born around 355–370 AD, is better-known because of her brutal murder in 415 than for her philosophy.[90] According to Damascius (*PH* fr. 43A), Hypatia had expertise in mathematics and other branches of philosophy, taught her own students and was a gifted teacher who also lectured publicly on Plato and Aristotle, moving freely around Alexandria dressed in her philosopher's cloak. In discussing her brutal murder, Damascius claims that she was loved by the whole city for her wisdom and her skilled and dialectical speech (*PH* fr. 43E).[91] As Gillian Clark (1993) has noted "both the content and the fact of her teaching no doubt contributed to her being lynched by a Christian mob."[92] However, Damascius' testimony regarding Hypatia must be treated with caution: although he presents her as a symbol of heroic pagan, philosophical resistance to Christian persecution in his account of her murder,[93] he is also concerned to depict his own teacher Isidore as the leading philosophic light in Alexandria, somewhat to the detriment of Hypatia whom he compares unfavourably with Isidore (*PH* F106A).[94] Secondly, Damascius' presentation of Hypatia as a public figure who wears the *tribon* (the philosophers' cloak particularly associated with the Cynics) and who shows her used sanitary-towel to a smitten student is reminiscent of the portrayal of the Cynic Hipparchia. Damascius relates another version where Hypatia prevailed over the student's passion using music but dismisses this version. Damascius' account may

90 Saffrey (2000), 814–5; Rist (1965), 216, 224; Cameron and Long (1993), 40; Dzielska (1995), 67–68. Cf. Penella (1984), 126–8, on Hypatia's birthdate and a convincing argument for placing it around 355; Deakin (2007), 51–52.

91 Cf. Clark (1993), 133–4.

92 Clark (1993), 133.

93 Watts (2006), 336–7.

94 Watts (2013), 160; 166–7, argues that the comparison is not intended to be detrimental towards Hypatia whose virtue has already been established in the text.

seek to downplay Hypatia's philosophical significance (in comparison with Isidore's) through the use of Cynic tropes.[95]

We know slightly more about Hypatia's writings than those of other female philosophers. Although later authorities minimised her contribution and placed her in the role of scribe to her father, recent mathematical research has shown that her own original work can be identified because she used an idiosyncratic method of division in the hexagesimal system.[96] So although Hypatia's work has been incorporated into texts attributed to others, it can be discerned; yet the contribution of the work she did with her father and independently has been obscured for centuries.[97] According to the *Suda,* Hypatia wrote a commentary on the mathematical writings of Diophantus, another on Apollonius' *Conic Sections* and wrote on the astronomical canon – probably a commentary on Ptolemy's *Almagest* – although Alan Cameron has suggested that this was a work entitled *Astronomical Canon* which comprised a commentary on Ptolemy's *Handy Tables*.[98] This suggests her expertise in astronomy and astrology, in addition to mathematics and philosophy.[99] Against Rist's (1965) weak thesis that Hypatia taught an old-fashioned type of Platonism little influenced by Plotinus and Iamblichus,[100] Alan Cameron and Jacqueline Long (1993) have argued that Theon and Hypatia were adepts of Iamblichean Neoplatonism, well versed in the Chaldaean wisdom which was considered to underlie theurgy.[101] Certainly the interest in theurgic ritual and divination, especially the *Chaldaean Oracles* and dream divination, displayed by Synesius, Hypatia's pupil, is suggestive.[102] This argument is convincing and Hypatia's work in astronomy also points in this direction. Synesius claims that Hypatia taught him how to make an astrolabe (*De dono* 311A), an instrument associated with astrology, and describes Hypatia's "oracular utterance" (*Ep.* 5.305–8).[103] Cameron and Long also suggest that Sosipatra's son, Antoninus,

95 Rist (1965), 220–21; Cameron and Long (1993), 41–44; Dzielska (1995), 50–52, 56–58; Saffrey (2000), 815–16.

96 Cameron (1990), 126; Cameron and Long (1993), 44–49.

97 Cameron and Long (1993), 44–49.

98 Cameron and Long (1993), 44 and n.134, 58–60. Cf. also Rist (1965), 216; Dzielska (1995), 71–73; Deakin (2007), 43–44.

99 Rist (1965), 216; Dzielska (1995), 54.

100 Rist (1965), 219–21.

101 Cameron and Long (1993), 50–59. Cf. n.89 above.

102 Synesius, *De insomniis* 135b, 140b; Bregman (1982), 145–54; Dzielska (1995), 63; Ronchey (1994), 180–84; Deakin (2007), 63–65; Dimitrov (2013), 57–58.

103 Cf. *Ep.*137.8–9; Cameron and Long (1993), 55; Dzielska (1995), 47–48, 54; Ronchey (1994), 180–81; Deakin (2007), 78–79).

who moved to Alexandria and had theurgic talent (Eunapius, *VS* 471–3), may have taught Hypatia, providing a direct link between Iamblichus and Hypatia.[104] The modern objection that Hypatia's expertise in science and mathematics excludes interest in theurgy is anachronistic, since almost every Neoplatonist combined scientific and philosophical erudition with mystical or theurgic expertise.[105] On this basis, Hypatia too may have been an example of the theurgist-philosopher, priestess as well as philosopher, according to the model derived from Plato's Diotima.

VI Conclusion

Although the evidence is often uncertain, it is fair to conclude that women engaged in reading Plato's works throughout antiquity from the time of Plato through to the sixth century AD, although it is unclear to what extent female involvement was sporadic or consistent. Although the biographical tradition generally presents such women as exceptions to the norm, the overall picture which emerges from extant literary and epigraphic evidence suggests that these women are fragments of a much wider picture of consistent female philosophical activity in antiquity. Caution should be exercised however, since we run the risk of either overestimating or underestimating women's roles in philosophy.

Female philosophers were actively involved in philosophical study and practices within Plato's Academy and the later Platonic tradition. Women are presented as especially concerned with ethical issues relating to traditional gender roles but are also depicted as familiar with Plato's dialogues in general. Plato's own views on women in *Republic* V influenced the later philosophical tradition, particularly Neoplatonism, in providing a philosophical justification for their involvement, although the fact that any such justification was needed serves to highlight patriarchy in ancient Graeco-Roman culture. Within the later Platonic tradition, female philosophers were frequently portrayed as priestesses and/or expert theurgists: alongside philosophical erudition, prophetic and ritual expertise – and the transmission of this expertise – was often attributed to these women. In this respect, Plato's Diotima acted as a central role model and paradigm for ancient male philosophers' representations of the ideal female reader of Plato. The example of Diotima seems to have also been

104 Cameron and Long (1993), 51–52.

105 Bregman (1982), 20; Cameron and Long (1993), 52–53; Dzielska (1995), 54; Addey (2014a), 171–213.

embraced by many women involved in the later Platonic tradition as part of their self-understanding as a female (Platonist) philosopher. The prominence of Diotima as paradigm in later Neoplatonism may be linked with the centrality of Plato's *Symposium* in Iamblichus' canon. The example and inspiration of Diotima is actualised in the accounts of many women associated with the Platonic tradition, including Clea, Sosipatra, Asclepigeneia, and possibly Hypatia.

CHAPTER 23

Calcidius

Christina Hoenig

Calcidius'[1] reception of Plato centers on the *Timaeus*, of which he provided a translation from the dialogue's beginning up to *Tim.* 53c, alongside a commentary covering *Tim.* 31c–53c. In this portion of the dialogue, Plato's protagonist Timaeus relates an account of the creation of our universe that became the doctrinal core of Platonism in its later tradition, and that set in motion a deluge of exegetical discourse from Middle Platonist, Neoplatonist and Christian thinkers. Part of the dialogue's fascination for writers across the philosophical and religious spectrum may have been the universality of its subject matter. To cover a topic as ambitious as the creation of the universe, Timaeus branches into multiple disciplines including geometry, arithmetic, musical harmony, human pathology, astrology, physics, and metaphysics. At the same time the reader must decide how to interpret Timaeus' ambivalent description of his creation account as both a μῦθος and a λόγος: whether to read the creation story as a myth, a rational exposition of natural philosophy, or a composite of both. Calcidius, our guide through at least some of the dialogue's complexities, is a shadowy yet fascinating figure of the later Platonic tradition whose work, widely-read in the Latin West of the Empire, was to exert a profound influence upon the dialogue's reception until the scholastic turn of medieval times.[2]

1 The spelling "Calcidius" of the early editions of Calcidius has been rejected by Waszink (1962), xvii and ibid. (1972), 236, based on an evaluation of the manuscript evidence. Waszink is followed by the majority of scholars today. I would like to thank Professors John Magee, Gretchen Reydams-Schils and Béatrice Bakhouche for their helpful advice on many of the issues touched upon in this article.

2 On the later reception of Calcidius' work, see Dutton (2003) and Somfai (2002), (2004).

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I Calcidius' Identity[3]

Calcidius' identity, like that of his dedicatee Osius, is a subject of notorious difficulty. Numerous manuscripts[4] identify Osius as a fourth–century bishop of Cordoba, one of the key players at the Christian Councils of Nicaea (325 CE) and Sardica (343 CE). This necessitates a dating of Calcidius' work to the first half of the fourth century.[5] Against this dating speaks, among other problematic circumstances, the fact that Calcidius' language and literary style sit uncomfortably in the first half of the fourth century[6] and find closer correspondence in the final decades of the same century. A later dating of the work has duly been assumed by Waszink (1962), Reydams-Schils (e.g. 1999, 2002, 2003) and most recently Bakhouche (2011). Waszink tentatively suggests Calcidius may have been an acquaintance of a different Osius, a Christian affiliated with the court at Milan in the late fourth century; Bakhouche names further potential candidates.[7] In his recent English edition of Calcidius' translation and commentary, John Magee[8] lists five different Osii that may fit the bill, but remains cautious in his verdict. It appears that we must rest content with assuming a date of composition sometime during the fourth-century, while further attempts at precision remain speculative.[9]

We are able to make a few observations concerning Calcidius' broader intellectual framework such as it emerges from his writing. Aside from an expertise in philosophical exegesis and a basic familiarity with biblical literature he betrays a confident use of Homer,[10] Hesiod[11] and Euripides,[12] the ability to reproduce Greek poetry in Latin hexameter and an occasional concern for

3 For the following, see also Waszink (1962), ix–xvii. For an updated appraisal of Calcidius, see the magisterial edition, translation and commentary on his work by Bakhouche (2011); for the present context: 7–13.

4 To name but a few from among the vast number of manuscripts: Vienna (lat. 278), Oxford (Bodl. Auct. F., 15), Vatican (lat. 3815). For a thorough discussion of the manuscript evidence, see Bakhouche (2011), 68–75.

5 For instance Wrobel (1876), Switalski (1902), van Winden (1959) and Dillon (1977/1996).

6 Cf. Bakhouche (2011), 30–34; Waszink (1962), XIV f.

7 Bakhouche (2011), 10f.

8 Magee (2016), viii-xi.

9 Against Dillon (1996), 402.

10 For instance, Calcidius, *in Tim.* ch. 93, p.326, l.17; 183, 415, 14–19. All citations of Calcidius according to Bakhouche (2011).

11 Calcidius, *in Tim.* 123, 360.14–15; 134, 370.28–371.2. See further Bertolini (1990).

12 Likely appealing to Osius' taste: it appears from the dedicatory letter that Osius had enjoyed a traditional liberal education (ibid. p.132.8–9) and held command over the Greek language, although it is unclear to what extent. Calcidius' flattering assertion that Osius

elegant diction, apparent especially in the letter of dedication to Osius[13] and the preface to his commentary. An analysis of grammatical and lexical features produces evidence of Greek interference in Calcidius' Latin, and leads to the assumption that the author was Greek.[14] This would explain the cryptic Latin syntax that the embattled reader of Calcidius often encounters.

A consequence of the early fourth-century scenario that places Calcidius and Osius in a relationship of bishop and (arch)deacon, respectively, has been the acceptance of our author's Christian stance.[15] Proponents of this view have found it corroborated by several references to Scripture in the commentary. These passages have been widely discussed but do not, in my opinion, offer conclusive evidence for Calcidius' Christianity.[16] I have argued elsewhere that the phrasing of individual passages in Calcidius' commentary disregards the significant Christological developments at the forefront of the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, an event that witnessed the official articulation of the Nicene Creed.[17] The fact that Osius of Cordoba was one of the key figures, at this event, to affirm the consubstantiality of Christ with the Father makes it problematic to assume that Calcidius would have chosen a phrasing that could be perceived as counteracting his patron's efforts.[18] Even if we reject Osius of Cordoba as Calcidius' patron, an author identifying as Christian might plausibly be expected to take these developments into account for his treatment of Platonic theology. While an overall appraisal of Calcidius' references to biblical writing makes it likely that Osius was well-acquainted with Christian dogma,[19] it

had not only been playing with the idea of producing a translation himself, but would have been able to complete the task with far more ease (*quamquam ipse hoc cum facilius tum commodius facere posses*, 132.11–12) is likely distorted by hyperbole.

13 Calcidius opens with a reference to Isocrates' *Ad Demonicum*.

14 Recently suggested by Magee (2016), 14–16.

15 Switalski (1902), Steinheimer (1912), Waszink (1962), xi; Baltes (1976) I, 172–84.

16 Hoenig (2014), 93–96.

17 Ibid.

18 The Nicene Creed explicitly identifies the Son as *genitus, non factus*. Calcidius uses *genitus* in his description of the created world at 119, 356.11, which would place the material world on an ontological level equal to Christ.

19 Cf. the reference to the star that signaled the arrival of Christ on earth, a "more sacred and venerable story" than Homer's *Iliad* (alluded to earlier in the same chapter, 126, 364.5). "With these things" Calcidius claims, Osius is "much better acquainted than others" (ll.11–12). See also Calcidius' statement on the vocabulary of his demonolgy at 133, 370.12: "[we] should [not] be alarmed by this term [*daemones*], given indiscriminately to good and to evil demons, just as the name 'angels' does not alarm us, even though some angels are servants of god (and are called 'saints') and others are attendants of that force which is hostile to us, **as you are well aware** (*ut optime nosti*)".

is reasonable, in the case of Calcidius himself, to imagine an author who is merely familiar with elements of Scripture, not unusual for learned writers of his time, and who is happy to point to Christian parallels to his own exegesis where appropriate, likely as a gesture of courtesy aimed at his patron.

II Calcidius' Sources

Scholars detect in Calcidius' exegesis both Neoplatonist and Middle Platonist ideas. The difficulty of drawing clear lines between Middle and Neoplatonic doctrine, often arduous in itself,[20] becomes even more pointed with Calcidius, who rarely identifies sources by name. Nevertheless, we perceive echoes of several Greek authors. Waszink,[21] Baltes and, for the most part, Gersh[22] identify Porphyry as the most important influence alongside Origen, the Neopythagorean Numenius and the *Didaskalikos,* with Porphyry assumed to have acted as an intermediary between these Middle Platonic writers and Calcidius.[23] The assumption of an overall Porphyrian character of Calcidius' work was challenged most explicitly and in favor of a Middle Platonic outlook by Dillon.[24] Reydams-Schils, in turn, emphasizes the influence of Origen on Calcidius and credits him with an authorial program that marks his independence from Porphyry.[25] Most recently Bakhouche, while hesitant to discount Porphyry completely, emphasizes passages in the commentary that

20 We should remember that these terms are modern, and that ancient Platonists did not even employ an equivalent distinction; nor was Plotinus regarded as the founder of a new school.

21 See Waszink and Jenson (1972), 240–42, and ibid. (1962), XCV; CV.

22 Gersh (1986) II, 431–2 and 445–51 with n.119, considers Calcidius' discussion on the transmigration of souls and the disorderly motion in the receptacle as Porphyrian and as representative of Calcidius' exegesis.

23 Waszink (1972), 242; ibid. (1962), LXXXIII, LXXXVII. Plutarch is a further source, but we may discount Apuleius' *De Dogmate Platonis*. The discussions in the commentary on geometry, arithmetic and astronomy are confidently traced back to the second-century Peripatetic Adrastus, whose writings likely reached Calcidius via Theon of Smyrna.

24 Dillon (1977/1996), 407–8. His focus is on Calcidius' characterization of matter and the triadic hierarchy of the divine in Chapter 176. van Winden had initially pointed to the Numenius, Alcinous and Adrastus but abandoned this view in a later edition (1965) in favor of Waszink's Porphyrian hypothesis. den Boeft (1970) and (1977) concludes that Calcidius' discussions on fate and on demons are non-Porprhyrian.

25 Reydams-Schils (2007), 311–14. Reydams-Schils suggests Calcidius may have confused the Christian Origen with the philosopher Origen (second to third century BCE).

appear to be independent of the Neoplatonist, most notably Calcidius' lack of interest in the earlier parts of the *Timaeus*, where Porphyry recognized ample opportunity for allegorical interpretation.[26] Worthy of mention are, moreover, the doctrinal parallels between Calcidius and Philo of Alexandria, whose *De Opificio Mundi* counts among the most influential works of early Middle Platonism. Runia (1993), who explores the Philonian elements in Calcidius' commentary, remains undecided whether Calcidius drew on Philo directly or indirectly via Origen, Numenius or Porphyry. I suggest that whatever source one may be most comfortable with rather depends on the specific part of Calcidius' commentary under focus. It is possible that Calcidius combined a running commentary on the *Timaeus* with individual shorter, topical treatises, taken from a variety of source material. This assumption would account for the fact that we find several more or less self-contained "mini-treatises" in the commentary: discussions on fate, demons, dreams, and the nature of matter, all of which lead far beyond the original dialogue.[27] In the present study I will take the liberty of relegating attempts at doctrinal alignment to the background. I will point to discernible exegetical strands individually, but pay greater attention to the overall effect of Calcidius' exegesis, my primary aim being not to list potential sources, but to appraise Calcidius' work as a coherent, self-contained piece of literature.

III The Project

Calcidius shows himself aware of the particular role the *Timaeus* holds for the Platonism of his time. In his commentary, he alludes to a programmatic order of disciplines, associated with specific dialogues of Plato, that encourages the student's progress towards wisdom. The *Timaeus* is the sequel to the *Republic*: the latter establishes justice in human affairs, whereas the former is an "investigation into natural justice", *naturalis aequitatis/iustitiae* [*contemplatio*].[28] Following the the *Republic*, the *Timaeus* would lead the student of Platonic wisdom to appreciate a higher form of justice, a form that pertained not to

26 Bakhouche (2011), 34–41; while Numenius too found important allegory in the Atlantis story, and provides Porphyry's starting point (Proclus, *in Tim.* 1. 76.30–77.23), the Middle Platonist Severus (Proclus, *in Tim.* 1.204.17) is an example of Middle Platonist indifference to all the prefatory material. For the evolution of Platonic treatments of the Atlantis myth, see Tarrant (2007), 60–84.

27 Bakhouche (2011), 29–30.

28 Cf. Calcidius, *in Tim.* 6, 206.29–208.3.

one's immediate political environment, but to the cosmos in its entirety and the divine entities within it.[29]

In what follows I will initially cover some features and key components of Calcidius' exegesis that align him with the broader Platonic tradition. I will then discuss a feature of his exegetical project that lends his work its most distinctive and original flavor: the interplay between translation and commentary.

Early in the commentary Calcidius provides an index that envisages twenty-seven topical sections. He takes up the discussion of Plato's dialogue from *Tim.* 31c but cuts off early after the lengthy thirteenth book *de silva* (covering chapters 268–355), its end corresponding to that of the translation at *Tim.* 53c.[30] This leaves us with Calcidius' treatment of the creation of the world's body and soul, of the heavenly bodies and all living creatures, of human intellectual capacities and eyesight and, finally, of the nature of matter.

I propose to single out Chapter 176 of his commentary since it introduces some of the integral features of Calcidius' exegesis: the metaphysical hierarchy consisting of a transcendent god, providential νοῦς and the world soul – elements that are tied up with the workings of divine providence and fate down to the human sphere. This chapter will, moreover, exhibit some of the difficulties we encounter when attempting to assign a particular doctrinal strand in Calcidius to either Neoplatonism or Middle Platonism.

In Chapter 176 Calcidius explains that the universe is contained and ruled, in the first instance, by the highest god who is the highest good, beyond substance and beyond the grasp of both opinion and intellect. This god transcends even the intelligible realm.[31] There follows an immediately subordinate hypostasis – perhaps the one that most readily corresponds to the Timaean demiurge – that is identified as *providentia*, *secunda eminentia* and νοῦς. This secondary element of the divine triad is of intelligible nature (*intellegibilis essentia*) and imitates the highest god's goodness, being unremittingly turned towards him.[32] It draws upon the highest god's goodness, by which it is adorned,

29 Calcidius, *in Tim.* 6, 208.7–8.

30 The letter to Osius mentions Calcidius' intention to complete the translation and commentary should his efforts find Osius' favor. Unfortunately, Osius remains silent and there is no extant continuation of the Calcidian project.

31 *cuncta quae sunt et ipsum mundum contineri principaliter quidem a summo deo qui est summum bonum ultra omnem substantiam omnemque naturam, aestimatione intellectuque melior* (Calcidius, *in Tim.* 176, 408.14–16).

32 *aemulae bonitatis propter indefessam ad summum deum conversionem* (176, 408.20).

just as everything else is adorned by its own doing.[33] Fate, in turn, applying to the lowest region inhabited by humans and animals, is described previously in the commentary as the *divina lex* – yet note that its place within the hierarchical triad is below Providence – and is substantiated[34] by the third hypostasis, the world soul.[35] Against this hierarchy of divine providence, matter stands passive and lends itself willingly to adornment, with the divine intellect, the triad's secondary element, permeating it and bestowing form upon it.[36] The providential divine intellect persuades matter by force to undergo whatever form it intends for it.[37]

We find parallels to Calcidius' comments in Ps.-Plutarch, the Neopythagorean Numenius,[38] Alcinous and the Neoplatonists. Ps.-Plutarch in Chapter 9 of his *De Fato* speaks of a πρόνοια that is the νόησις of a first god.[39] Calcidius' triadic metaphysical structure can, moreover, be aligned with the three Neoplatonic hypostases[40] but we find a triadic scheme already with Numenius who proposes a triad of three gods in fr. 11, with the first god being entirely transcendent,

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33 *estque ei ex illo bonitatis haustus, quo tam ipsa ornatur quam cetera quae ipso auctore honestantur* (176, 408, 20–22).

34 In Ps.-Plutarch *De Fato* 568c (early second–century BCE) fate is divided into an "active" aspect and into fate as "substance". A "third instance" of fate is described as λόγος θεῖος at 568d and 570a). Cf. also *Did.* XXVI. 1,3; Apuleius, *De Plat.* II. 23.

35 *haec porro anima est mundi tripertita quod in substantia positum fatum … diximus* (Cal. *in Tim.* 149, 384.19–20).

36 *silva vero perpetiente exornationique se facilem praebente, penetratam siquidem eam usque quaque divina mens format plene …* (269, 498.17–20).

37 *providа parentia ratione nixa necessitas, et opus dei tale est, ut vi persuadeat* (Cal. *in Tim.* 270, 500.1–2). For an appraisal of Calcidius' exposition on matter, see van Winden (1959). Matter, according to Calcidius, is neither corporeal nor incorporeal but potentially both, a position that finds correspondence in Alcinous and Apuleius (*recte igitur eam simpliciter et ex natura sua neque corpoream neque incorpoream cognominamus, sed possibilitate corpus et item possibilitate non corpus.* 320, 544.17–19). Calcidius' triadic structure is discussed also by Reydams-Schils (2002), 196–201 and Dillon (1977/1996), 403–4.

38 Hadot (1960) I, 459–60, points to close parallels also in Macrobius, advancing Numenius (transmitted via Porphyry) as a possible common source for this Latin writer and Calcidius.

39 *De fato* 572f–573a. Ps.-Plutarch distinguishes three "Providences" specifically, starting out with the hypostasis below a mysterious "first god". The first πρόνοια is in charge of ordering the intelligible realm, the secondary one is "that of the second gods who move through the heaven" (δευτέρων θεῶν τῶν κατ' οὐρανὸν ἰόντων, 573a) and oversee human affairs. The third is, obscurely phrased, the "providence and forethought of the demons that oversee human affairs" (πρόνοιά τε καὶ προμήθεια τῶν ὅσοι περὶ γῆν δαίμονες …). Cf. Dillon (1977/1996), 324–5.

40 Plotinus e.g. *Enn.* V 1 [10] 8. It is Plotinus who first identifies νοῦς with the second hypostasis. Cf. den Boeft (1970), 90, and Bakhouche (2011), 774 n.354.

the second and third gods, apparently, on a par.[41] Fr. 16 distinguishes between a Numenian νοῦς that is identified as the Good and a second god who is the god of generation, and imitates the Good.[42]

Further parallels to Calcidius appear in Chapter X of the *Didaskalikos*.[43] In a much-discussed passage Alcinous distinguishes between potential intellect (νοῦς ἐν δυνάμει), superior to soul (ψυχῆς ἀμείνων),[44] and actualized intellect (ὁ κατ' ἐνέργειαν), superior to potential intellect. He hints at an even higher metaphysical entity, "finer" than actualized intellect and being its cause.[45] While there is no exact match for Calcidius' metaphysical hierarchy among the authors mentioned, the often striking similarities place Calcidius' Platonism in the mainstream tradition of Middle Platonic thought.

A problematic aspect in pre-Plotinian authors is the under-defined distinction between the role of a highest, transcendent divine principle and that of a second god, usually identified with Plato's demiurge. Calcidius' commentary showcases this difficulty. At 137, 374.10–18 Calcidius discusses the creation of the human soul and body: "[Plato] says that a twofold faculty of the soul has been given to the soul of the universe (…) by the highest and intelligible god (*a summo et intellegibili deo*); [the irrational parts of the human soul (…) and the entire body] have been bestowed upon mortals by those powers generated by himself (i.e., the lesser divinities) on the command and the order of the divine architect (*iussu et ordinatione architecti dei*) lest the perfection of the All be

41 ὁ θεὸς ὁ μὲν πρῶτος ἐν ἑαυτοῦ ὤν ἐστιν ἁπλοῦς, διὰ τὸ ἑαυτῷ συγγιγνόμενος διόλου μή ποτε εἶναι διαιρετός· ὁ θεὸς μέντοι ὁ δεύτερος καὶ τρίτος ἐστὶν εἷς· Proclus expands on this in fr. 21, explaining that Numenius called the first god "father", the second the "maker" (ποιητὴν) and the third "that which is made" (= the cosmos, ποίημα) but incorrectly aligns the second and third god instead of the first and the second.

42 The first god is ἑστώς, ὁ δὲ δεύτερος … κινούμενος; the first god is tied to the intelligible, the second to both the intelligible and the physical sphere: ὁ μὲν οὖν πρῶτος περὶ τὰ νοητά, ὁ δὲ δεύτερος περὶ τὰ νοητὰ καὶ αἰσθητά. Similarly in fr. 12 we learn that the first god is inactive and the second god's father; the second god being referred to as the demiurge and described as "moving through heaven". See Dillon (1977/1996), 367–72, for a discussion of these and further fragments.

43 Similarly also in Ps.-Plutarch Chapter 9, 573a.

44 Chapter X.2, 1. Dillon (1993), comm. ad loc., conjectures that this is human intellect, taking the actualized intellect to be that of the universe in its entirety.

45 We also note the mention in Alcinous of the "will of the highest god", by which the latter has filled everything: κατὰ γὰρ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βούλησιν ἐμπέπληκε πάντα ἑαυτοῦ. Calcidius associates *providentia* with the god's will at 144, 380.24–28. Bakhouche (2011), 774 n.356, points to a similar description of providence as adorning or embellishing the physical cosmos in ps.-Plutarch IX 573a.

incomplete had these [parts] also been given to them by the craftsman and the intelligible god (*si haec etiam ab opifice et intellegibili deo forent*)". The *intellegibilis deus*, a discussion of whom Calcidius had envisaged for section XXVII of his commentary, is identified as the *summus deus* as well as the *architectus deus* and the *opifex deus*. It appears that the two highest metaphysical hypostases are merged,[46] which raises concerns about a transcendent supreme divinity that is, nevertheless, in contact with the material realm.

While Calcidius nowhere clarifies the blurred lines between the divine entities at the top of his hierarchical metaphysics, it helps to consider the exegetical contexts in which these seemingly contradictory representations appear. The *summus deus* is separated sharply from the subordinate spheres in Calcidius' discussion *de fato*, especially Chapter 188. The emphasis there is on minimizing the contact between the highest divinity and the lower spheres, all with a view to absolving it from any responsibility for evil arising in the human realm, an issue explicitly addressed by Calcidius[47] a little earlier in the commentary. The highest god issues the divine law: fate (*fatum*) that is substantiated by the world soul (*anima mundi*), the third hypostasis.[48] Nevertheless, the choice of whether or not to conform with this law remains with the individual, who is thus responsible for his own actions.[49] In the context of Calcidius' treatment *de silva*, however, the *summus deus* and the second hypostasis (Providence: *providentia*, *mens provida dei*), appear less as separate entities than different aspects of one and the same divine essence.[50] In other words, in the context of the creation (i.e. the adornment of matter) a more syncretistic portrayal of the first and second metaphysical hypostases is at work.

We should not censure Calcidius' qualities as an exegete too harshly. It appears that the exact relation between the divine hypostases, and the assignment of roles in the creation process had not been settled for many Middle Platonic writers: Apuleius, for instance, emphasizes the transcendence of the highest god whom he describes as "the best" (*optimus*) and "in want of nothing" (*nihil indigens*); as "ineffable, unseen, unsubdued" (*indictum, innominabilem,* ἀόρατον, ἀδάμαστον). Elsewhere, however, he identifies him as the

46 Noted by Reydams-Schils (2007), 247–50.

47 Calcidius, *in Tim.*, 174, 202.1: *unde ergo mala*?

48 Ibid. 149, 186.5–9.

49 In accordance with the principle *si hoc erit, sequetur illud*, discussed in detail by Calcidius in chapters CLIII–CLV.

50 Den Boeft (1970), 90f., notes that providence and the highest god are not clearly distinguished in the discussion *de silva*. He criticizes van Winden's close correlation between the *providentia* of the *tractatus de fato* and the *providentia* of the *tractatus de silva*.

"creator and builder of all things" (*genitor rerumque omnium extructor*) and the world's "divine architect" (*deus artifex, Dogm. Plat*. I.5; *aedificator deus mundi*, I.7), without ever clearly distinguishing between a fully transcendent and a creative divine hypostasis. A similar example is Maximus of Tyre, who equally fails to account for the discrepancy between his description of god as an entirely transcendent intellect and as the *generator* and father of all things.[51] Calcidius' exegesis, similarly to that of the authors just mentioned, bears witness to the difficulty encountered by Middle Platonists relating a transcendent divine entity to the material world.

IV Translation and Commentary

What could have sparked Osius' interest in a Latin version of the *Timaeus*? Calcidius merely suggests that the former had planned to "borrow" Plato's work from the Greeks for a Roman readership ([*opus*] *a Graecis Latio … mutuandum,* 132.8–11). Osius' assignment may have been a symptom of the declining knowledge of Greek in the Roman West from the late second century onwards, a development mirrored in the growing demand for Latin translations discernible from this period. Christian scholars increasingly engaged with contemporary theological and philosophical discussion. As regards the *Timaeus* specifically, the dialogue attracted renewed attention all the more since leading Christian intellectuals had begun to exploit the Timaean creation account for the assertion of their Christian faith.

Calcidius aims to simplify his Latin reader's access to the dialogue. Simplification is much-needed since, he observes, the various topical discussion within the dialogue are set out in a technical jargon[52] inaccessible to the non-expert.[53] The requested Latin version of the *Timaeus* is insufficient to grasp its complexities: "Having approached the first parts of Plato's *Timaeus* … I have not only translated [the text] but have, moreover, composed a commentary on the same parts, in the belief that a copy (*simulacrum*) of an obscure subject matter (*reconditae rei*) without the unfolding of an interpretation (*sine interpretationis explanatione*) would be rather more obscure than the model (*exemplo*) itself". As is often noted,[54] Calcidius here anticipates the subject

51 Cf. Tull (1968), 164–75.

52 Ibid. 2, 204.1–3; 18–21: *cunctis certarum disciplinarum artificialibus remediis occurrendum erat, arithmeticis astronomicis geometricis musicis, quo singulae res domesticis et consanguineis rationibus explicarentur …*

53 Ibid. 1, 132.20–134.2.

54 e.g. Dutton (2003), 189; Reydams-Schils (2007), 305.

matter of the dialogue, the relation between the Platonic intelligible *exempla* and their sensible *simulacra* with a somewhat blunt analogy to the relationship between Plato's vorlage, the *exemplum*, and his translation, the *simulacrum*. Crucially, however, his commentary ("the unfolding of an interpretation", *explanatio interpretationis*) enters the equation as the connecting link that enables the reader to grasp the relation between the Greek and Latin texts (if only an equally simple solution could be found for the problematic relationship between Plato's intelligible and sensible realms!).

Calcidius' exegetical method is to take over individual passages from the translation, without any major modifications[55] and following the order of the dialogue, and to offer his interpretation subsequently. This, however, does not exhaust his efforts: a closer look at the translation reveals that Calcidius does not simply reproduce the Greek, but underlines his exegetical mission by expanding, shortening or modifying the underlying text, all with a view to disambiguating and streamlining the Platonic material. In what follows, I shall discuss a number of passages that bear witness to the dynamic that emerges between the two layers of Calcidius' interpretative project: translation and commentary.

At *Tim.* 29b2 Timaeus locates his discourse on an epistemological plane that is intrinsically bound up with the ontological status of his subject matter. In the case of his creation account, an account concerning the ever-changing, physical realm, likelihood is the highest degree of certainty that may be attained. Timaeus' train of thought begins as follows:

> μέγιστον δὴ παντὸς ἄρξασθαι κατὰ φύσιν ἀρχήν. ὧδε οὖν περί τε εἰκόνος καὶ περὶ τοῦ παραδείγματος αὐτῆς διοριστέον, ὡς ἄρα τοὺς λόγους, ὧνπέρ εἰσιν ἐξηγηταί, τούτων αὐτῶν καὶ συγγενεῖς ὄντας·

> With regard to every [subject matter] it is most important to begin at its natural beginning. In the case of a model and its copy, it is to be specified that the accounts must bear a kinship to the very objects of which they serve as exegetes.

Calcidius translates:

> *et quoniam rationem originis explicare non est facile factu, distinguendae sunt imagines exempli*

55 Cf. Bakhouche (2011), 27–30. According to Bakhouche, those parts of the translation that are picked up in the commentary are rendered with greater exactness (ibid. 111).

que naturae. causae quae cur unaquaeque res sit ostendunt, earundem rerum consanguineae sunt.

And since it is not easy to unfold an account of the origin [of the world] one must distinguish between the nature of the copy and that of the model. The causes that show why any one thing exists bear a kinship to those things themselves.

Unlike Plato, who speaks of a method for every type of inquiry (παντός), Calcidius speaks specifically of an account regarding a "beginning": *originis*. It appears that in this context of the dialogue Calcidius equates the ἀρχή of the cosmos[56] with the ἀρχή of "every type of inquiry" (παντός) of the present paragraph. What is more, his focus on the *naturae* of both the intelligible and the sensible world reflects the Greek κατὰ φύσιν, "in accordance with [a thing's] nature" and may have been increased by his awareness of the number-one point of contention for the Timaean commentary tradition, the ontological status or nature of our universe, that is: the question whether our world was of created origin or not.[57]

How to determine the [ontological] *natura* of a particular object? Calcidius points to the "causes" of the object's origin,[58] causes that explain why this

56 The cosmos (often referred to as τὸ πᾶν – did Calcidius understand παντός to be the genitive of "the All"? If we accept his Greek identity, this seems hardly likely), is in fact mentioned in the preceding sentence of the dialogue *Tim.* 29b1–2: τούτων δὲ ὑπαρχόντων αὖ πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τόνδε τὸν **κόσμον** εἰκόνα τινὸς εἶναι.

57 I discuss Calcidius' stance on this notorious question in Hoenig (2014).

58 Baltes (1996) IV, 358, n.1, believes Calcidius' interpretation of λόγοι as *causae* is simply erroneous, but fails to take into account the author's intentions in this important passage. We find a reference to 'seeds' also at Philo's *Opif.* 42–3. At *Aet.* 94.1–4. (*SVF* 2.618) Philo refers to Chrysippus' notion of a seed from which the universe is created. After Philo, we find a reference to the demiurge who sows a part of himself into matter with Plutarch at *Quaest. plat.* 2.1, 1000e–1001b. Similar Aristotelian language appears, e.g. at Aristotle's *Gen. An.* 1.2, 716a4–7; 1.21, 1.20, 729a9–13. It is possible that we recognize in Calcidius not only the echo of a Stoic λόγος that permeates the universe, but also the echo of Plotinian metaphysics. The seeds mentioned by Plotinus at *Enn.* III 1.7 appear to be closer to the Stoic, physical seeds. Yet elsewhere, Plotinus explains that the coming-to-be of material objects is ultimately prompted by their emanation from the first principle that is the One (cf. Plot. *Enn.* III 2.2; 5.1; 5.3; 5.6. See O'Meara (1996), 122–3, for a more detailed discussion). The One's "thought" or "thinking" is the λόγος while its first emanation is "intellect" or νοῦς, imagined as the actualized state of the potential One. νοῦς, itself remaining immutable, passes on intelligible notions, the λόγοι, to the third hypostasis soul which, in turn, is the mediatory link between the intelligible and the physical realms.

particular object exists (***causae*** *quae cur unaquaeque res sit ostendunt*, l.2). This connection, indicated in the translation, between an object's ontological status or *natura* and the *causa* of its coming-to-be anticipates Chapter 23 of the commentary. Calcidius there aims to counter a common anti-creationist contention: that it is impossible for the universe to be created *as well as* immortal. In response Calcidius explains that this *is*, indeed, possible since the creative cause (*causa*) of the universe is god:

> All existing things are either the works of god, the works of nature, or those of a human artificer imitating nature.[59] The origin and beginning of the works of nature are the seeds (*semina*) … all those take their origin in time (*in tempore*), for the birth of natural things and of time is simultaneous. Thus, the works of nature, since their origin is the moment in time in which they began to exist, are also allotted an end and destruction within the fatal chain and series.[60] The origin and beginning of the works of god, however, is incomprehensible. For there is no certain knowledge of anything, no indication of the time in which they begin their existence. Only the cause or reason why a particular thing exists [is] perhaps [known] – but even this is hardly understood. Just as the seeds (*semina*) are the fundamental principles (*fundamenta*) of things produced according to the law of nature, so the fundamental principles of the works created by god are the *causae*.[61]

We can relate this excerpt from the commentary to our translation sample in the following way: Calcidius wants to deliver an explanatory account (*ratio*) of the origin of the universe.[62] An object's *origo*, more specifically: the fundamental principle (*fundamentum*) of its coming-to-be, determines its ontological status or *natura* (i.e., intelligible or sensible). For the works of nature, the *fundamenta* are the seeds (*semina*) that "program", as it were, these works' coming-to-be and their destruction. Their origin is thus of a temporal nature. As regards the works of god: the sensible universe, the *fundamenta* of its existence are *causae* that are difficult to establish. Like the divine creator, the causes of his

59 Bakhouche believes that the triad god-nature-man mirrors the Neoplatonic hypostases and points to Proclus *in Tim.* II, 263.2–6.

60 Fate, the *lex divina*, is associated with the world soul, the third and lowest of the three metaphysical hypostases.

61 23, 230.6–19.

62 I have argued in Hoenig (2013) that Calcidius presents this "methodological" passage at *Tim.* 29b2–d1 as a reflection upon his role as a commentator and translator of Plato's dialogue.

works are of eternal existence. The *causae* of god's work are *consanguineae* to it, in other words: they are akin to, "of the same *nature*" as the god's work. The universe, with the *causae* of its existence possessing eternity, itself possesses everlasting existence. Calcidius incorporates into his rendering of the present paragraph of Plato's *Timaeus* an anticipation of the interpretation provided in the commentary, where the origin of the universe is explained not as temporal, but as causative. The result of his two-fold exegesis is an overall rounded and coherent portrayal of Platonic doctrine.

Skipping over several lines in the Greek text, we find Timaeus closing his methodological discussion by drawing the following relational analogy:

Tim. 29c3:

> ὅτιπερ πρὸς γένεσιν οὐσία, τοῦτο πρὸς πίστιν ἀλήθεια
>
> As being stands in relation to becoming, so truth stands in relation to convincingness.

Calcidius translates by introducing into the analogy a value judgment of the following kind:

> *quantoque est melior essentia generatione, tanto fama et opinionis incerto praestantior veritas.*
>
> To the same degree as being[63] is *better than* generation, (to that degree) truth is *better than* myth and the uncertainty of opinion.

His emphasis is not upon the analogous relation between being/ becoming and opinion/ truth, as is Timaeus' concern, but on the superiority of the ontological status of being to which the superior epistemological status of the corresponding explanatory account is directly related. Calcidius' choice of *opinio* for πίστις picks up an earlier mention in the Greek text of δόξα at *Tim.* 28a2–3: τὸ δ' [γιγνόμενον] αὖ δόξῃ μετ' αἰσθήσεως ἀλόγου δοξαστόν ("that which [becomes], in turn, is opined by opinion with the help of irrational sense perception").

63 Calcidius uses *essentia* in alternation with *substantia* without a difference in meaning (e.g. *nam essentia quidem alicuius rei substantia est*, 325, 548.27–28. Similarly *docet nos substantiam sive, ut Cicero dicit, essentiam,* 27, 234.20–21 – cf. Seneca, *Ep.* LVIII 6 where this coinage is also ascribed to Cicero: [on *essentia*]: *Ciceronem auctorem huius verbi habeo, puto locupletem*. In the present context, *essentia* describes a constant and stable type of nature, which is contrasted with *generatio*, a "partial" kind of existence.

What is more, his deviation from the original text at *Tim.* 29c3 is likely prompted by an association of the present analogy with the segmented partitioning of reality represented by the Divided Line in Plato's *Rep.* VI 509d–511c. This passage is frequently tied to *Rep.* VII 533d–534a where the epistemological planes πίστις and εἰκασία are *sub*divisions of δόξα.[64] Chapter 342[65] of the commentary summarizes these passages, with the subdivisions of *opinio* (δόξα) being *credulitas* (πίστις) and *aestimatio* (εἰκασία). *credulitas* is the epistemological faculty that deals with sensible objects: "[Plato] associates *credulitas* with sensible objects, that is: what is grasped by our eyes, ears and other sense organs" ([accommodat] *credulitatem porro sensilibus scilicet quae oculis auribus ceterisque sensibus comprehenduntur,* 342, 568.19–24). As for *aestimatio* he associates *aestimatio* with fictitious, invented and imaginary things that are imitative appearances in relation to what truly is; they are not, however, bodies that are perfected and alive ([accommodat] *aestimationem fictis commenticiisque et imaginariis rebus, quae iuxta veros simulata vultus corpora tamen perfecta et viva non sunt,* 342, 568.24–25).[66] Taking a look at our translated passage of *Tim.* 29c3, the addition of *fama* to *opinionis incerto* emphasizes the fact that the opposite of *veritas* is not only opinion grounded on ambiguous sense-perception, but also includes stories and imaginations devoid even of sensible evidence, as is confirmed by the fact that all other occurrences of *fama* in Calcidius' writing describe myths and legends, individual fame and repute, or rumour.[67] Calcidius' exegetical translation bears witness to his knowledge of other Platonic dialogues that help tie the *Timaeus* to the wider Platonic corpus, thereby reinforcing the coherence of Platonic dogma while accrediting Calcidius' role as a Platonic authority.

I hope to have shown that Calcidius' merit, in the long line of Platonic commentators, does not rest primarily with his commentary as the Quellenforscher's treasure chest. The more attention we pay to the relation between translation and commentary: the two inseparable ingredients that make up Calcidius' Platonic venture, the clearer an image emerges of an author who is envisaging a coherent picture of philosophical dogma and who combines and gives shape to the source material at his hand in accordance with his own distinctive Platonist program.

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64 342, 568.17–26.

65 Calcidius' discussion of the three ontological genera: form, matter and sensible objects, in this later chapter necessitates a return to the initial distinction between the intelligible and sensible realms at *Tim.* 27d5–29c3.

66 A similar exegesis occurs at *Did.* VII.5.

67 At 250, 480, 12, *fama* is explicitly contrasted with *scientia*, firm knowledge.

CHAPTER 24

Augustine's Plato

Gerd Van Riel[1]

With only a limited knowledge of Greek, Augustine (354–430 AD) had no direct access to Plato's works in the original Greek version. Yet he had a fairly good general knowledge of Plato's philosophy, partly through the Latin translations of Cicero, but also through many references to Plato in Cicero, and in the "Libri Platonicorum" that played an important role in Augustine's intellectual development. Moreover, Augustine will have read things about Plato in Christian sources as well – even though, obviously, one needs to take into account that this encounter is with "Platonism" rather than with Plato himself.

In general, one can state that Augustine knew *of* Plato to a more than elementary degree, despite his rather limited access to Plato himself. Moreover, a palpable sympathy for Plato runs through Augustine's works, to the degree that he often tries to safeguard what he regards as Plato's initial intentions over the interpretations of the "Platonici". Augustine may well have inherited this positive evaluation from Cicero, but it is clear that Augustine knew enough about Plato to appreciate his philosophical doctrines and merits in their own right.

In this contribution, we shall first discuss the extent of Augustine's general knowledge of Plato, and the direct references to Plato that can be retrieved from Augustine's work. We then investigate the sources from which he drew the materials and the interpretation of Plato that came along with these sources. The discussion is based on a close study of all passages where Augustine refers to Plato or the Platonists, as retrieved from the CETEDOC database.[2] The aim is not to discuss Augustine's "Platonism" as such. We will focus on the direct references to Plato himself, and discuss Platonism in general only when it is relevant to understand Augustine's way of dealing with his sources.

1 The research leading up to this contribution was carried out in the context of a research professorship granted by the Belgian Francqui Foundation. I thank the editors for their valuable comments on this text.

2 *Brepolis Latin Direct: Library of Latin Texts*, Brepols publishers.

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I Augustine's "Handbook Plato"

Augustine had a fairly good general knowledge of Plato's doctrines. In his *De uera religione*, he gives a general survey of Platonic doctrines, which we have to discuss in detail, but not without first considering Augustine's initial introduction of Plato in this treatise as "writing more to please than to persuade".[3] In the light of the following pages, this might seem to be just an exaggerated *boutade*, but it must be read in the light of an important *caveat* concerning Augustine's reliance on Plato: despite the nobility of philosophy, even despite the fact that in the same treatise, Augustine will say that Plato and Socrates would be Christians, were they to return, with the change of only a couple of their words (*paucis mutatis uerbis*, *De uera relig.* IV, 7) – despite all this, Plato's philosophy has not successfully thrown off superstitious belief (*Ibid.* II, 2 and V, 8). This points to a fundamental difference that Augustine sees between Platonism and Christianity: in sharp contrast to the insights of Plato and Socrates, their religion remained uncritical and conventional.[4] In Christian faith, on the other hand, this harmony between religion and thought has been achieved: "So it is taught and believed as a chief point in man's salvation that philosophy, i.e., the pursuit of wisdom, cannot be quite divorced from religion" (trans. J.H.S. Burleigh).[5]

This judgment does not, however, prevent Augustine from subscribing to the major part of Plato's philosophy. At *De uera relig*. III, 3, he summarizes Plato's views in an interesting way, which is worth quoting at length:

> Suppose Plato were alive and would not spurn a question I would put to him; or rather suppose one of his own disciples, who lived at the same time as he did, had addressed him thus: "You have persuaded me that truth is seen not with the bodily eyes but by the pure mind, and that any soul that cleaves to truth is thereby made happy and perfect. Nothing hinders the perception of truth more than a life devoted to lusts, and the

3 *De uera relig.* II, 2: *suauius ad legendum quam potentius ad persuadendum scripsit Plato.*

4 Cf. *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 12 on Plato's worshipping many gods. Also *Epist*. 118, 3 is particularly negative about the *Platonici*, who despite the emergence of Christendom continued to propagate what Plato said. See also Rist (2012), 216–18 on Augustine's reaction to Platonism in *Ciu. Dei*.

5 *De uera relig.* V, 8: *Sic enim creditur et docetur quod est humanae salutis caput, non aliam esse philosophiam, id est sapientiae studium, et aliam religionem.* For a discussion of this view, see Fuhrer (2007), 272–5.

> false images of sensible things, derived from the sensible world and impressed on us by the agency of the body, which begets various opinions and errors. Therefore the mind has to be healed so that it may behold the immutable form of things which remains ever the same, preserving its beauty unchanged and unchangeable, knowing no spatial distance or temporal variation, abiding absolutely one and the same. Men do not believe in its existence, though it alone truly and supremely exists. Other things are born, die, are dissolved or broken up. But so far as they do exist they have existence from the eternal God, being created by his truth. To the rational and intellectual soul is given to enjoy the contemplation of his eternity, and by that contemplation it is armed and equipped so that it may obtain eternal life. So long as it is weakened by love of things that come to be and pass away, or by pain at losing them, so long as it is devoted to the custom of this life and to the bodily senses, and becomes vain among vain images, it laughs at those who say that there is something which cannot be seen by the eyes, or conjured up by any phantasm, but can be beheld by the mind alone, by the intelligence. You, my master, have persuaded me to believe these things. Now, if some great and divine man should arise to persuade the peoples that such things were to be at least believed if they could not grasp them with the mind, or that those who could grasp them should not allow themselves to be implicated in the depraved opinions of the multitude or to be overborne by vulgar errors, would you not judge that such a man is worthy of divine honours?" I believe Plato's answer would be: "That could not be done by man, unless the very virtue and wisdom of God delivered him from natural environment, illumined him from his cradle not by human teaching but by personal illumination, honoured him with such grace, strengthened him with such firmness and exalted him with such majesty, that he should be able to despise all that wicked men desire, to suffer all that they dread, to do all that they marvel at, and so with the greatest love and authority to convert the human race to so sound a faith. But it is needless to ask me about the honours that would be due to such a man. It is easy to calculate what honours are due to the wisdom of God. Being the bearer and instrument of the wisdom of God on behalf of the true salvation of the human race, such a man would have earned a place all his own, a place above all humanity." (trans. Burleigh).

After this long exposition – which Augustine framed as a dialogue (!) – he will argue that this true salvation of the human race has been achieved through the Son of God. That is hardly unexpected. What is interesting for present purposes is that we find in the quoted passage a large number of

elements that would of necessity be included in a handbook version of Plato's philosophy:

- the bipartition of the world into an intelligible and a sensible realm, a realm of eternal truth over against the corruptibility of the bodily world[6]
- the existence of immutable, unextended, timeless and eternal forms[7]
- a division of the soul, with intellect as the leading part
- a theory of moral improvement on the basis of distancing oneself from the body, and contemplating eternal truth
- a divine reward for people who succeed in doing this
- an opposition between the philosopher and the crowd (*multitudo*) who do not understand the message

On the basis of all this, Augustine infers that Plato's philosophy presented a prefiguration of the salvation. This suggests that he has had access to a source in which at least the import of Plato's fictitious reply in *De uera religione* was ascribed to Plato himself: that a salvation is brought about by the election and illumination of a person who is cherished by God, and thus, that some kind of divine grace is at play. The person in question would then be "the bearer and instrument of the wisdom of God". We will come back to the question of the sources in due course.

From other references we get other elements of Augustine's "handbook version of Plato":

- the immortality of the soul.[8]
- the tripartition of the soul: *ira–libido–ratio*.[9]
- the theory of reminiscence: Augustine rejects it, not because the epistemological grounds are unsound (as he takes them over in his own theory of illumination), but because of its reliance on the theory of transmigration of the soul.[10]

6 See also Augustine, *Acad.* III, 17, 37, where he links the opposition between *mundus intelligibilis* and *mundus sensibilis* to the opposition between truth and opinion. On the additional reference to "civic virtues" (*uirtutes ciuiles*) in this text, see below, p. 465.

7 See also *Diu. Quaest.*, q. 46; *Ciu. Dei* VII, 28.

8 Augustine knew Plato's proof of the immortality of the soul in *Phdr.* through Cicero's translation (*Tusc. Disp.* I, 23, 53, also in the 6th book of his *de re pub.*). At *Ciu. Dei* I, 22, Augustine refers to an anecdote concerning "the book in which Plato discusses the immortality of the soul" (namely that Theombrotus killed himself after having read the *Phd.*), without apparently being aware of the dialogue itself; the source is Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* I, 34, 84.

9 *Ciu. Dei* XIV, 19.

10 *De Trin.* XII, 15, 24, including a reference to the teaching of a slave boy in the *Meno*, which Augustine took from Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* I, 24, 57. See also Augustine, *Epist.* 7, 1.

- the project of establishing an ideal state, with the expulsion of the poets (for which see below)
- the role of God as the highest good that defines the finality of human behaviour.[11] Yet this reference is more interesting for what it does *not* say. For the highest good is identified with Plato's God (i.e., the Demiurge), and not depicted as a principle that transcends the Demiurge (and the Ideas). Augustine knows of this principle of the One Good, but he ascribes it to the *Platonici* rather than to Plato himself.[12] Hence it seems safe to say that Augustine knew the role of the Good (viz., the transcendent One Good) in Platonism only through the Neoplatonists.[13]

Augustine clearly knows best the *Timaeus*, from which he reproduces a number of physical theories, now showing that Plato's physics are in harmony with (or even deduced from) the creation narrative in Genesis,[14] then arguing against them on the basis of scriptural evidence.[15]

Of greater interest are the passages where he invokes the authority of Plato on specific points. First of all, Augustine welcomes Plato's account of the divine Craftsman in *Timaeus*: he obviously agrees that the world is created,[16] but also that the divine is described in terms of an intellect that contains the universe.[17] He is also pleased with Plato's statement that god is filled with joy upon the completion of the world.[18] Likewise, he shares Plato's claim that god must be good, which he found expressed at *Timaeus* 28a–b[19] and to which he

11 *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 8: *Ipsum autem uerum ac summum bonum Plato dicit Deum.*

12 See Augustine *Epist.* 118, 3, referring to the *unum atque summum bonum* of the *Platonici*.

13 This point can also be made on the basis of Augustine's interpretation of the Demiurge in *Tim.*, where Augustine does not follow Cicero's reading that the Demiurge is dependent on an ulterior, transcendent principle, but is to be seen, rather, as the *summus deus*. We will come back to this point in the next section.

14 See, e.g., *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 11 and 15 on the four elements; XII, 19 on the role of number in the creation.

15 See, e.g., *Ciu. Dei* XXII, 11.

16 See, e.g., *Ciu. Dei* XII, 13; *Sermo* 241, 8 and 242, 5.

17 Augustine, *Ciu. Dei* XII, 27.

18 *Ciu. Dei* XI, 21: *Et Plato quidem plus ausus est dicere, elatum esse scilicet deum gaudio mundi uniuersitate perfecta*. *Tim.* 37 c: Ὡς δὲ κινηθὲν αὐτὸ καὶ ζῶν ἐνόησεν τῶν ἀιδίων θεῶν γεγονὸς ἄγαλμα ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ, ἠγάσθη τε καὶ εὐφρανθεὶς ἔτι δὴ μᾶλλον ὅμοιον πρὸς τὸ παράδειγμα ἐπενόησεν ἀπεργάσασθαι.

19 *Ciu. Dei* XI, 21: *Hanc etiam Plato causam condendi mundi iustissimam dicit, ut a bono deo bona opera fierent.*

refers in an echo of *Republic* II, 378b–380c[20] (whereas the elaborate theological views of *Laws* X seem to have been unknown to him).

In the same context of the *Timaeus*, Augustine privileged the first part of the address of the Demiurge to the young gods (*Tim.* 41a–b), because it argues so clearly that the traditional pagan gods are created, that they are secondary to and ruled by the highest god, and that they are not of an eternal nature: their eternal life depends on the Demiurge's will to maintain the indissolubility of their body and soul.[21] From this, Augustine draws the conclusion that Plato recognizes only one god, and that the others are angels or demons.[22]

II Augustine's Sources

Augustine himself gives us a small indication about the way he did his research on Plato. At *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 4, he first explains that he will not go into the details of Plato's conclusions in the three fields of philosophy ("the goal of all actions, the cause of all natural objects and the light of every act of reason", thus summarizing what he calls the moral, the natural and the logical subdivision of philosophy at the end of the chapter). The reason why he refrains from doing so is that

> Plato makes a point of perpetuating the notorious habit of his master Socrates, whom he represents in his books as leading the discussions but concealing any knowledge or any opinion of his own; and because he

20 *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 13: *Sed habemus sententiam Platonis dicentis omnes deos bonos esse nec esse omnino ullum deorum malum.*

21 See *Ciu. Dei* IX, 16: *Deum quidem summum omnium creatorem, quem nos uerum deum dicimus, sic a Platone praedicari asseuerat, quod ipse sit solus qui non possit penuria sermonis humani quauis oratione uel modice conprehendi* (see below for a discussion of this text); *Ibid.* IX, 23: *hos si Platonici malunt deos quam daemones dicere eisque adnumerare, quos a summo deo conditos deos scribit eorum auctor et magister Plato. Ibid.* X, 31: *de his quos in mundo deos a deo factos scribit Plato, apertissime dicat eos esse coepisse et habere initium, finem tamen non habituros. Ibid.* XII, 27: *Ita sane Plato minores et a summo deo factos deos effectores esse uoluit animalium ceterorum, ut inmortalem partem ab ipso sumerent, ipsi uero mortalem adtexerunt. Ibid.* XIII, 16, where *Tim.* passage is quoted in Cicero's translation, and XIII, 17–18; XXII, 26.

22 Augustine, *De baptismo* VI, 44, 87: *In quod et Plato pari ratione consentit et unum deum seruans ceteros angelos uel daemonas dicit.* See, however, *c. Iul. imperf.* I, 116, where Augustine states that Plato errs when he says that the minor gods create the bodies (*dii minores, sicut Plato errat, sunt corporum conditores*).

> too chose to adopt this same habit, the result is that Plato's own views on important subjects are also far from easy to decipher. (*Ciu. Dei* VIII, 4)

These are not words of someone who finds himself uninformed about Plato's teaching – or at least: of someone who is prepared to admit any lack of knowledge on the matter. To the contrary: Augustine wants to convey the message that he knows Plato to such an extent that a general appreciation is in place. But he also indicates that he does know the details which he is presently discarding:

> At the same time, I ought to note and record in this work certain tenets that appear in his writings, either pronounced by himself or recounted and written down by him as having been expressed by others and presumably approved by him. (*Ibid.*)

Augustine thus claims to have firsthand information on Plato, enough to allow him to draw distinctions and to reveal central tenets. Even though there is reason to believe that he had read only one dialogue in full, namely Cicero's translation of the *Timaeus*,[23] it is clear that Augustine collected passages from Plato that were available from other sources. Again, Cicero stands out as a mediator, by his reference to, and translation of, numerous passages, and by paraphrasing Plato's doctrines in many of his works.[24] From Cicero, Augustine also inherited the very positive judgment on Plato as the best of all philosophers.[25]

It can be shown that *Tusculanae disputationes* and *De natura deorum* were the main texts from which Augustine derived his information about Plato. Some elements of his interpretation of Plato are clearly dependent on Cicero's understanding. Take for example Augustine's interpretation of the theory of ideas. As Stephen Gersh has shown, Augustine (*Diu. Quaest.* q. 46, titled *De ideis*) takes over from Cicero the Middle Platonic identification of ideas as

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23 Courcelle (1943), 156–9, who also indicates that Augustine's quotations from *Tim.* also cover a part of Cicero's translation that is no longer extant (a lacuna of *Tim.* 43b–46a): *Ciu. Dei* XIII, 18 *Si dii minores, quibus inter animalia terrestria cetera etiam hominem faciendum commisit Plato, potuerunt, sicut dicit, ab igne remouere urendi qualitatem, lucendi relinquere quae per oculos emicaret*. This is a reference to *Tim.* 45 b: τοῦ πυρὸς ὅσον τὸ μὲν κάειν οὐκ ἔσχε, τὸ δὲ παρέχειν φῶς ἥμερον, οἰκεῖον ἑκάστης ἡμέρας, σῶμα ἐμηχανήσαντο γίγνεσθαι.

24 Cf. Augustine, *Epist.* 118.3, where he refers to Cicero as his direct source on Plato.

25 See, among many other examples, *c. Iul.* IV, c. 777.51; *Ciu. Dei* VIII 4; *Ciu. Dei* VIII 12 (on Aristotle's inferiority to Plato).

"reasons", along with their eternity and immutability, their being perceived by the rational part of the soul, and their being contained in the divine intellect.[26]

Yet Cicero does not seem to be the only Platonic source. Cicero's authority is *not* followed by Augustine when it comes to interpreting one of the most important elements of the *Timaeus* narrative and it seems likely that the reason for this lies in Augustine's use of other sources of information on Plato's dialogue. Carlos Lévy has convincingly argued that in Cicero's translation of the passages that deal with the Demiurge, his role is downplayed in favour of a higher cause from which the Demiurge receives his task. Thus, Cicero omits the word *maker* (ποιητής) in his translation of *Tim.* 28 c. The reason seems to be that Cicero wanted to read a transcendent principle into the *Timaeus*, to which the Demiurge was subordinate.[27] Now, in Augustine's remarks on the *Timaeus*, there is nothing to suggest that the Demiurge is not the highest god. Quite the opposite: whenever Augustine summarizes the role of the Demiurge, as we have seen above, he refers to him as *summus deus*. It could be that Augustine did not notice Cicero's admittedly subtle way of downplaying the role of the Demiurge. But it is more probable that, in his interpretation of Cicero's translation, Augustine was relying on other doxographical sources that taught him a less nuanced reading of the passages in question – one that simply identifies the Demiurge with the highest god. We find such an account, for instance, in Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies*,[28] and in another source that Augustine may well have been using, even though its role has not yet been recognized in literature: Apuleius' *De Platone et eius dogmate*. Apuleius was a "Middle Platonist", a 2nd century fellow countryman of Augustine, working in Madaura, where Augustine would receive his initial education about 250 years later. Augustine was well aware of Apuleius, and refers to him on several occasions. The main text he cites is *De deo Socratis*,[29] mainly to argue against the author's demonology. It would be logical to suppose that Apuleius' doxographic and biographical work on Plato would also have been available to Augustine. While it has been argued that Augustine did not take it into account, on the ground that he would have found it outdated once he had discovered the "Platonicorum libri",[30] there is more to be said. For indeed, what we find in Apuleius' *De Platone* is

26 Gersh (1986), I 412, referring to Cicero, *De re pub.* III, 33; *De Leg.* II, 8 and *Orat.* 10.

27 Lévy (2003), 100–103.

28 See Dillon (1977/1996), 410.

29 Augustine, *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 14 refers directly to Apuleius' *DDS*, claiming that a better title had been "*De daemone Socratis*". See also below, on Apuleius' *DDS*, c. 4 (*ut idem Plato ait, nullus deus miscetur hominibus*) as the source for the reminiscence from *Symp.* 203a (θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μείγνυται).

30 Thus Augustinus Lexikon, art. *Apuleius*, 1986–94, c. 424.

precisely the kind of simplified Middle Platonic scheme of the highest causes that we are looking for at present.[31] At *De Platone* I, 5, Apuleius points out that the highest god, apart from being incorporeal, one, and unmeasurable, is also "father and creator of all things" (taking up the description of the Demiurge in *Timaeus* 28 c), who is blessed, imparting blessedness, lacking nothing, and who cannot be expressed in words. This corresponds with the presentation of the *summus deus* which Augustine ascribes to the *Timaeus*. It is, moreover, echoed in a passage where Augustine explicitly refers to Apuleius (*Ciu. Dei* IX, 16) and explicitly quotes *De deo Socratis* c. 3. One element, though, is absent from *De deo Socratis*: Augustine's reference to "God, the supreme creator of all things, whom we call the true God" (*Deum quidem summum omnium creatorem, quem nos uerum deum dicimus*). The *De deo Socratis* makes the gods subordinate to the highest, ineffable divinity, but does not refer to the latter as the creator. This important additional information (at least, for Augustine's purposes) figures in *De Platone* I, 5 (*Is unus, ait, aperimetros, genitor rerumque omnium exstructor, beatus et beatificus, optimus, nihil indigens, ipse conferens cuncta*), and Augustine may well have found it there.[32]

There is another instance where Apuleius' *De Platone* surfaces as the probable source of Augustine's rendering of Plato's thought. At *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 2, Augustine begins his long discussion of the (non-)value of pagan philosophy with an extensive survey of the history of Greek philosophy. P. Courcelle has tried

31 Cf. Dillon (1977/1996), 312–13.

32 A similar view is proposed in what was known as the *Summarium librorum Platonis* discovered by Klibansky (1949), 8, and recently edited by Stover (2016) as "The lost third book of the *De Platone*" by Apuleius. In the discussion of *Tim.*, "Apuleius" here says that "[Plato] is of the opinion that the order of the world is generated by god and ruled by him" (*De Plat.* III, 32.7: *uidetur illi et mundi ordinatio genita esse a deo <et> administrari*), even though "it is difficult <…> to provide an account of this god himself" (*Ibid.* 32.8: *Ipsum deum difficile <…> posse narrari*). One may combine this with what "Apuleius" in the same work has to say about *Rep.* VI and VII, i.e. that the forms are incorporeal and have the same being as god and that chief nature of the good" (*Ibid.* 4.6–7: *Ceterum illas formas incorporales esse, eandem substantiam habentes deo et principali illi naturae boni*), and that "god is incorporeal and the same as the nature of the good" (*Ibid.* 5.1–2: *In septimo aeque placet illi deum incorporalem esse et eundem naturae boni*). All of this indicates that "Apuleius" conceives of god as a creator, whose incorporeal nature encompasses the Ideas, and who coincides with the good, whereby the exact nature of the good remains difficult to describe. That comes remarkably close to Augustine's interpretation of Plato's god. We leave open the question of the identification of the author of this *Summarium* as Apuleius. For a critical assessment, see Claudio Moreschini's review of Stover (2016) in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2017.03.31.

to identify the direct source of this survey, but it is much more likely, given the bishop of Hippo's intellectual temperament, that Augustine will have worked his own way through different sources rather than relying on one (obviously biased) survey of philosophical sects.[33] In this survey of the history of philosophy, Augustine presents Plato as the most brilliant student of Socrates who ultimately found his master's teaching insufficient, and went looking abroad, "wherever the fame of an acclaimed science that he could integrate would bring him". Plato thus went to Egypt and to Italy, where he was initiated in Pythagorean doctrines. He ultimately combined all this teaching into one system, integrating the contemplative tenet of Pythagoras with Socrates' emphasis on the active life. Immediately thereafter, Augustine explains that Plato divided philosophy into three parts: *moralis*, *naturalis* and *rationalis* (*Ciu. Dei* VIII, 4). This general presentation is remarkably similar to the one offered by Apuleius, who writes that, upon Socrates' passing away, Plato was looking for intellectual progress and had

33 Courcelle (1943), 179–81 argues that the historical introduction to philosophy at *Ciu. Dei* VIII 2–4 was taken from a contemporary Greek source that had been translated into Latin: Celsinus of Castabala's, Συναγωγὴ δογμάτων πάσης αἱρέσεως φιλοσόφου, which described different kinds of "heretical" opinions of philosophers up to the days of Iamblichus. Augustine seems to have read this work, of which we have no further traces (Celsinus' work is mentioned in *Suidas* 1305. Augustine refers to a certain Celsinus, without naming a title or context, at *Acad.* II, 2, 5, and in his prologue to *De haeresibus* he gives a general reference to a description of sects by "Celsus"). Though not impossible, Courcelle's identification thus rests on very shallow grounds. In any case, Cicero's work also contains a number of short doxographic surveys of the history of philosophy and lists of names. See, e.g., Augustine's reference at *Acad.* III 17, 38 to Plato's dependence on Pythagoras, who got the doctrine of the immortality of the soul from a Syrian philosopher, Pherecydes, in a time when Greek philosophy was still hardly existent (*graeca philosophia, ... quae tunc aut paene nulla era taut certe occultissima*). Courcelle (1943), 128–9, links this reference to Aponius, a fifth c. cleric who in his *Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles* indeed says the following: *Ferecides autem uocabulo animam hominis prior omnibus auditoribus suis tradidisse docetur* (*In Cant.* III, 5). Yet at p. 180 n.5, Courcelle remarks (commenting on *Acad.* III, 17, 38) that "cette indication sur Pythagore et Phérécyde, notait Dyroff [*Der philosophische Teil der Encyclopädie des Cornelius Celsus*, *RhMus* 88 (1939), 15] ne dérive d'aucun auteur latin conservé". But the source is clearly Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* I, 16, 38: *Pherecydes Syrius primus dixit animos esse hominum sempiternos.* Cicero also indicates that the Pythagoreans, who took over this idea from Pherecydes, were exceptional (*multaque saecula postea sic uiguit Pythagoreorum nomen, ut nulli alii docti uiderentur*), thus occasioning Augustine's remark that Pythagoras stands out among the early Greek philosophers. This amounts to saying that looking for one single source for the historical survey is not particularly fruitful. If we focus on the case of Plato, whose philosophy is presented in general terms at *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 4, this may be documented by bringing in evidence also from Apuleius' *De Plat.*, as we will do.

recourse to the doctrine of Pythagoras. Yet in order to become an accomplished scientist, he went to Egypt to learn geometry and astronomy, and then returned to Italy to study with the Pythagoreans Eurytus of Tarentum and Archytas. Having learned also the dialectic discoveries of Parmenides and Zeno, Plato then integrated all his knowledge into his tripartite philosophy: *naturalis a Pythagoreis, de Eleaticis rationalis atque moralis ex ipso Socratis fonte* (Apuleius, *De Platone* I, 3). The message conveyed in both passages is the same: Plato was not entirely satisfied with the education he received from Socrates, and turned towards the sciences of the Pythagoreans, which (with the omission of the reference to the Eleatics' logic in Augustine) led to the tripartition of philosophy. In Augustine's case, the tripartite structure of philosophy does not really follow from the previous course of events (with a twofold structure: action-contemplation), which forces him to add a further note indicating that the twofold division is not contrary to the threefold one. Maybe Augustine did not know who Parmenides and Zeno were (which would explain their absence from the survey of the earlier philosophers at *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 2),[34] wherefore he left them out in his account of the origins of the threefold division of Plato's philosophy. Whatever the cause may be, I think this omission is an indication that Augustine was indeed following the thread of Apuleius' presentation, as Augustine's exposé would have been clearer had the tripartition of philosophy not been introduced immediately after his story of Plato's intellectual formation (which only contained the elements of a twofold division). But he took the order of the presentation from Apuleius, though without quoting him word for word.

The tripartition of philosophy itself was certainly not made by Plato. It is a division typical of the Hellenistic schools and ascribed *post factum* to Plato.[35] It was, thus, not too outlandish for Apuleius to have looked for such a tripartition of philosophy in Plato, and he was not the only author to do so.[36] Likewise, the

34 The only mention of Parmenides is at *c. Iul.* IV, c. 776.23, in a simple enumeration of names of the earlier philosophers.

35 Cf. Hadot (1979), 211.

36 Cf. Cicero, *Ac.* I 19: *Fuit ergo iam accepta a Platone philosophandi ratio triplex, una de uita et moribus, altera de natura et rebus occultis, tertia de disserendo et quid uerum quid falsum quid rectum in oratione prauumue quid consentiens quid repugnet iudicando*. Also *Liber XXI sententiarum* c. 9, l.199 (Dolbeau): *Philosophia in tres partes distribuitur: moralem, naturalem, rationalem.* The Ps.-Augustinian *Liber XXI sententiarum* can be seen as a "notebook" of Augustine, consisting of various documentary remarks which he noted down for later use. See Dolbeau (1996) and (1997). The sources of this particular *sententia* are clearly stoic (as the text focuses on the fourfold nature of incorporeals, and on the *dicibilia*: l.206–11 Dolbeau). Cf. also D.L. 3.49.

stages of Plato's formation were part of the standard biography, and they are also referred to by Cicero.[37] But to my knowledge, Apuleius is the only one to link this tripartition immediately to the different stages of Plato's formation, and that is precisely what we find also in Augustine. That does not amount to saying that Apuleius is the only source of this and the preceding chapters in *Ciu. Dei* VIII. It means, rather, that Apuleius was one of the authors from whom Augustine compiled his information on Plato and the history of Greek philosophy.

Cicero and Apuleius thus moulded the young Augustine's view of Plato and Platonism, which was most probably complemented also by doxographic surveys and anthologies. From the Summer of 386 AD onwards, however, their doctrinal influence was overshadowed by Augustine's notorious encounter with the "Libri Platonicorum" (mainly Plotinus and Porphyry, whose works were at least partly available to Augustine via a translation by Marius Victorinus).[38] Their Platonism provided Augustine with a solid metaphysical backbone, in light of which Augustine would reread the information on Plato that he took over from Cicero and the other authors he read previously.[39] As Augustine testifies about Plotinus: "One praises him as the one who understood Plato better than anyone else"[40] – which obviously means that Augustine prefers Neoplatonism over earlier (Sceptic or Middle Platonic) interpretations of Plato, without for that matter making the distinction between different periods or schools.

But the Neoplatonists also yielded valuable new, though still indirect, information on Plato. For instance, Augustine initially embraced the theory that perfect happiness and wisdom cannot be achieved in this life – a view which

37 See, a.o., Cicero, *De re pub.* I 16: *Sed audisse te credo, Tubero, Platonem Socrate mortuo primum in Aegyptum discendi causa, post in Italiam et in Siciliam contendisse, ut Pythagorae inuenta perdisceret ... Itaque cum Socratem unice dilexisset, eique omnia tribuere uoluisset, leporem Socraticum subtilitatemque sermonis cum obscuritate Pythagorae et cum illa plurimarum artium grauitate contexuit.*

38 Augustine, *Conf.* VII 9, 13; VII 20, 26; VIII 2, 3; at *De beata uita* I 4, Augustine's knowledge of Plotinus is still minimal (*lectis Plotini paucissimis libris*); for the general identification of the *libri Platonicorum* see Courcelle (1943), 159–76.

39 Thus, for instance, Augustine took over from Plotinus a distinct hesitancy to call the ideas "reasons": Gersh (1986) I 412 (referring to Plotinus, *Enn.* V 1 [10], 5.13–14 and VI 8 [39], 17.14–16). See also Carey (2000), 180–89 for a good judgment about Augustine's transition from Cicero's Platonism to the Neoplatonists'. Brown (2000), 86–87 exemplifies Augustine's change of mind under the influence of Plotinus.

40 *Ciu. Dei* IX, 10: *Plotinus certe nostrae memoriae uicinis temporibus Platonem ceteris excellentius intellexisse laudatur*.

he puts forward (at *Soliloquiae* I, 14) with clear verbal reminiscences of Plato's *Theaetetus* (176a–b: the philosopher has to flee from the sensible world), of the allegory of the cave (*Rep.* VII, 514a–517a) and of the loss of feathers of the soul (*Phdr.* 246c–d), without apparently knowing that he was quoting Plato himself. The source was Porphyry, as Augustine indicates in his *Retractions* I, 4.3: in this work, he ultimately rejects the idea that happiness is not possible in this world, regretting his earlier dependence on a bad maxim of Porphyry.[41]

As we have seen, a specific source must have been the basis for Augustine's fictitious reply of Plato in *De uera relig.* III, 3, quoted above. A close parallel, though not a literal correspondence, can be established between this passage and Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella*. In this text, Porphyry is obviously elaborating on Plato's discussion of the purification through virtue (*Phaedo* 69 c), as well as on his juxtaposition of the pious and the impious (*Laws* IV, 716e–717a), the assimilation to God (*Theaetetus* 176b), alongside Plato's theological premises that god must be good (*Rep.* II, 378b–380c, and *Laws* X, 897b–d), and that God is not envious (*Tim.* 29e), nor responsible for evil (*Rep.* X, 617e). Porphyry connects all of this into an exhortation to pursue virtue as the way of making one's mind like unto God (c. 16), constantly dwelling on the opposition between the wise person and the wicked, with the explicit statement that "only the mind of the wise man is sanctified as the temple of the divine, and God is best honoured by him who knows Him best … to a wise man God gives the authority of a God"[42] (echoed in Augustine's text as the honours due to the wise person and to the wisdom of God). In the same vein, Porphyry adds that "God strengthens the man who does noble deeds", and that "God cares for the wise man and watches over him. Therefore is the wise man blest, because he is in God's keeping"[43] (cf. Augustine's statement that God strengthened the wise man). Moreover, Porphyry states that "God calls us to honour Him by His truly reverend and blessed majesty",[44] that if one lets one's thought and mind be turned towards God, one's "speech shall be inspired, shining through the light of God's truth"[45] (cf. Augustine's mention of illumination). He also refers to

41 At *Ciu. Dei* X, 29, Augustine repudiates Porphyry for having taken over this Platonic doctrine.

42 Porphyry, *Marc.*, c. 11: λέγει … παρ' ἀνθρώποις καθιερῶσθαι τὴν διάνοιαν μάλιστα τοῦ σοφοῦ μόνην, τιμήν τε προσήκουσαν ἀπονέμεσθαι τῷ θεῷ ὑπὸ τοῦ μάλιστα τὸν θεὸν ἐγνωκότος … ἀνθρώπῳ δὲ σοφῷ θεὸς θεοῦ δίδωσιν ἐξουσίαν.

43 Porphyry, *Marc.*, c. 16: θεὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπον βεβαιοῖ πράσσοντα καλά … καὶ θεὸς σοφοῦ κήδεται καὶ προνοεῖ· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μακάριος ὁ σοφός, ὅτι ἐπιτροπεύεται ὑπὸ θεοῦ.

44 Porphyry, *Marc.*, c. 18: ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκείνου εὐλαβεστάτης καὶ μακαρίας σεμνότητος εἰς τὸ σέβας αὐτοῦ ἐκκαλούμενον.

45 Porphyry, *Marc.*, c. 20: καὶ ὁ λόγος ἔνθεος ἔσται διὰ φωτὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἀληθείας λαμπρυνόμενος.

"the knowledge and firm faith" of those who believe in God[46] (echoed in Augustine's reference to faith). Thus, even though Augustine is not really quoting this *Letter*, and even though important elements of Augustine's argument are lacking (such as the reference to the salvation of the human race), it is certainly true that the spirit of Augustine's fictitious reply on the part of Plato comes close to that of Porphyry's letter. Whether or not Augustine was actually quoting from the lost part of Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella* must remain a matter of pure speculation. But I believe it is safe to say that Augustine is referring to the very personal relationship between the wise person and God. This personal relationship is also expressed in Porphyry's letter and a number of allusions and parallels can be detected. Moreover, the reference to a "salvation of the human race" bears a certain likeness to what Porphyry was saying – according to Augustine – in his *De regressu animae*, namely that "not one system of thought has yet embraced a doctrine that embodies a universal path to the liberation of the soul, no, neither the truest of philosophies, nor the moral ideas of the Indians, nor the initiation of the Chaldaeans, nor any other way of life".[47] This should be read as saying that no other system of thought *except for Plato's* has shown the way to salvation,[48] which allows one to conclude that this inference, which was lacking from the *Letter to Marcella* as we have it, stems from Porphyry after all. The link with divine grace is laid at *Ciu. Dei* X, 29, on the basis of Porphyry's own words.[49] Augustine addresses him in the following way:

> Still, you acknowledge the existence of grace, since you say that it has been granted to only a few to attain to God by the strength of their intelligence.

46 Porphyry, *Marc.*, c. 21: διὰ τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς βεβαίας πίστεως.

47 Augustine, *Ciu. Dei* X, 32: *Cum autem dicit Porphyrius in primo iuxta finem de regressu animae libro nondum receptum in unam quandam sectam quod uniuersalem contineat uiam animae liberandae, uel a philosophia uerissima aliqua uel ab Indorum moribus ac disciplina, aut inductione Chaldaeorum aut alia qualibet uia.* Augustine repeats the reference to *uerissima philosophia* at *Acad.* III 19, 42. Cf. Porphyry, *Marc.*, c. 3: ὀρθὴ φιλοσοφία.

48 See Hadot (1960b), 239: "Le texte du *de regressu* veut dire que seule la philosophie de Platon pourrait sauver les âmes: elle est la seule vraie voie (c'est le sens de toute la critique que le *de regressu* a fait de la purification chaldéenne); elle seule nous conduirait aux Principes qui délivrent. Mais cette philosophie n'est pas accessible aux masses (Porphyre ici touche à un problème capital de l'histoire de l'humanité)". On Porphyry's preoccupation of offering an alternative view of universal salvation over against the Christians, see now Simmons (2015).

49 Reference is made, probably, to Porphyry's *De regressu animae*: cf. the explicit reference to this work in the immediate context (which, admittedly, concerns a different passage, on the corruptibility of the body). See Hadot (1960b), 220.

> For you do not say: "a few decided to attain" or "a few chose"; no, when you say: "it has been granted," you are undoubtedly bearing witness to the grace of God, and not to any self-sufficiency of man.[50]

Augustine then links this to Plato's view, with an indirect reference to *Phaedo* 66b–67b, which was obviously referred to by Porphyry himself:[51]

> Indeed, you resort to this formula even more openly when, following Plato's view, you yourself state without hesitation that in this life man by no means arrives at perfect wisdom, yet those who live on an intellectual level may find their want fully supplied after this life by God's providence and grace.[52]

It is clear, then, that Augustine's reference to Plato in *De uera religione*, as in the texts quoted from *De Ciuitate Dei*, is immediately set in a specifically (Porphyrian) Neoplatonic light. For he emphasizes the ascent towards the divine, the personal connection between God and the wise person, the specific interpretation of the Platonic exhortation that the philosophers must flee from this world by becoming godlike, the salvation of human kind, and even God's grace and providence. Moreover, in this context, Augustine also refers to other specific passages from Plato, most of which he found in Porphyry himself.[53] But his way of treating them is creative, bringing in information from other sources as well: at *Ciu. Dei* X, 30, he refers to "a particularly notorious dogma ascribed to Plato, namely that, as the dead derive from the living, so the

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50 Augustine, *Ciu. Dei* X, 29: *Confiteris tamen gratiam, quando quidem ad Deum per uirtutem intelligentiae peruenire paucis dicis esse concessum. Non enim dicis: 'paucis placuit' uel 'pauci uoluerunt', sed cum dicis esse concessum, procul dubio Dei gratiam, non hominis sufficientiam confiteris.*

51 Courcelle (1943), 227–8.

52 *Ibid.*: *Vteris etiam hoc uerbo apertius ubi Platonis sententiam sequens nec ipse dubitas in hac uita hominem nullo modo ad perfectionem sapientiae peruenire, secundum intellectum tamen uiuentibus omne quod deest prouidentia Dei et gratia post hanc uitam posse compleri.*

53 (a) The universe as a perfect living being, eternal and perfectly happy: *Ciu. Dei* X 29 (*Platone quippe auctore animal esse dicitis mundum et animal beatissimum, quod uultis etiam esse sempiternum*), which presupposes an exegetic combination of *Tim.* 30a–b (the world as a perfect living being) and 34b (the world-soul as a perfectly happy god) with 41a–b (the eternity of that which has been bound together by the demiurge). (b) The transmigration of human souls into bestial bodies (*Ibid.* X 30: *Platonem animas hominum post mortem reuolui usque ad corpora bestiarum scripsisse certissimum est*), which dwells on *Tim.* 42c, *Phdr.* 249b, *Phd.* 81e, *Rep.* X 618a–620d. Augustine's addition that Plotinus

living derive from the dead", a thesis from *Phaedo* 70 c[54] which Porphyry discarded.[55] The wording (*quod esse Platonicum maxime perhibetur*) proves that Augustine knew this only secondhand, but this does not prevent him from bringing it together with a source that will certainly not have been quoted by Porphyry: Virgil's *Aeneid*, which Augustine links with Plato's myth of Er in the following way:

> He [Porphyry] also revealed as fiction the words of Virgil, spoken presumably under Platonic influence, and telling of purified souls dispatched to the Elysian fields – an allegoric name, it seems, for the joys of the blessed – and summoned to the river Lethe, that is to forgetfulness of the past:
> "So that with memory erased they may
> Again behold the vault on high and start
> To grow desirous of return to bodies" (*Aeneid* 6, 750–51).[56]

It has been shown that Augustine likes to interpret Virgil along (Neo)platonic lines.[57] For present purposes, it is interesting to see how Augustine brings Virgil into the discussion between Porphyry and Plato. He paraphrases the preceding verses, which do bear a distinctively Platonic imprint:

> *... exinde per amplum*
> *mittimur Elysium et pauci laeta arua tenemus.*
> *has omnis, ubi mille rotam uoluere per annos,*
> *Lethaeum ad fluuium deus euocat agmine magno.* (*Aeneid* 6, 746–9)

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agreed with this, over against Porphyry, suggests that the information comes from Porphyry himself. Cf. Courcelle (1943), 228. He may of course have recalled, in both cases, the passages from *Tim.* from his own reading of Cicero's translation, but the interpretation rests on a clustered combination of different Platonic passages.

54 Plato, *Phd.* 70c: παλαιὸς μὲν οὖν ἔστι τις λόγος οὗ μεμνήμεθα, ὡς εἰσὶν ἐνθένδε ἀφικόμεναι ἐκεῖ, καὶ πάλιν γε δεῦρο ἀφικνοῦνται καὶ γίγνονται ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων.

55 Augustine, *Ciu. Dei* X 30: *Qua sententia profecto abstulit quod esse Platonicum maxime perhibetur, ut mortuos ex uiuis, ita uiuos ex mortuis semper fieri.*

56 *Ibid.*: *falsumque esse ostendit quos Platonice uidetur dixisse Vergilius, in campos Elysios purgatas animas missas – quo nomine tamquam per fabulam uidentur significari gaudia beatorum – ad fluuium Letheum euocari, hoc est ad obliuionem praeteritorum: 'Scilicet inmemores supera ut conuexa reuisant / Rursus et incipient in corpora uelle reuerti'.* The same quotation (and the same interpretation) returns at *Ciu. Dei* XIII, 19.

57 Courcelle (1955), 95–136.

To modern readers, the Platonic origin of these verses jumps to the eye: the millenary revolution of the world, and the river Lèthè are direct reminiscences of the myth of Er that closes the tenth book of the *Republic*. Augustine's statement that this is said "presumably under Platonic influence" (*Platonice uidetur dixisse*) may cast some doubt on the extent to which he recognized this literal correspondence. Yet, on the other hand, it is Augustine himself who made the (Platonic) association that allowed him to have recourse to Virgil as a confirmation of what Plato said in the *Phaedo*. After all, it takes some basic knowledge of Plato to bring together these passages from Porphyry and Virgil. This means, or so I believe, that Augustine did recognize the literal reference to Plato in Virgil's verses, and that he was up to establishing the link between the myth of Er and the passage from the *Phaedo* (which he obviously did not know directly). He thus interprets Porphyry's reference by adding extra information on Plato's views which he gathered from elsewhere (most probably Cicero's *De Republica*). This means that Augustine's knowledge of Plato was not just contextual, i.e. dependent on the context of his direct source (in this case: Porphyry), but that he also had recourse to a broader set of Platonic passages, put together from different sources, which he could set to use in his works. He may have known this information by heart, but he will, more probably, have had a kind of record available in the form of personal notes or hypomnemata.

A similar way of dealing with Virgil is to be found at *Ciu. Dei* XIV, 3, 2, where Augustine quotes *Aeneid* VI, 730–34, expressing the thought that the heavenly essence is incarcerated in the body, wherein all kinds of passions arise. Augustine rightly points out that Virgil "seems to express here in his beautiful verses the thought of Plato" (*Vergilius platonicam uideatur luculentis uersibus explicare sententiam*). He brings in this quote in a succinctly Neoplatonic context of interpreting the passions, integrating the Stoic rendering of them, and linking it with Plato's theory of the body as a prison or chain of the soul[58] (*Phd.* 82e), which Augustine may have known through Cicero,[59] through Plotinus (*Enn.* I 9 [16], 1) and/or through Porphyry (*Ad Marcellam*, c.33). In any case, Augustine distances himself from this theory, as, according to him, "the corruption of the body, which burdens the soul, is not the cause of the first sin, but the punishment; it was not the perishable flesh that made the soul sinful, but the sinful soul made the flesh perishable".[60]

58 For a more detailed account of this Neoplatonic interpretation, see Van Riel (2004), 507–31.

59 Cicero, *Pro M. Aemilio Scauro*, 4 refers to Plato's *Phd.* and says: ... *quom corpore animus tamquam carcere saeptus teneretur.*

60 Augustine, *Ciu. Dei* XIV, 3: *corruptio corporis, quae adgrauat animam, non peccati primi est causa sed poena; nec caro corruptibilis animam peccatricem, sed anima peccatrix fecit esse corruptibilem carnem.*

Also in his way of dealing with the Platonic virtues, Augustine's account is clearly following Neoplatonic patterns. At *Acad.* III, 17, 37, in a discussion of Plato's distinction between *mundus intelligibilis* and *mundus sensibilis*, Augustine adds that anything that is done in this world by the virtues which Plato calls "civic" (*uirtutes quas ciuiles uocabat*), can only be called "resembling the truth" (*uerisimile*), as those virtues are nothing but likenesses of real virtue, known only to a handful of wise persons. The distinction between different classes of virtues (or rather: different levels at which the same set of virtues occur with an increasing degree of distance from the body), is elaborated in Neoplatonic milieus. Plotinus described an ascent in four levels, the bottom of which is occupied by the civic virtues (πολιτικαὶ ἀρεταί), which belong to the soul within the body. The other levels successively ascend towards the intellect, with the intelligible models as the highest degree of virtue.[61] Echoes of these classifications are to be found in the *Liber XXI sententiarum*, where a threefold categorization of virtue is put forward: civic, purificatory and exemplary virtues.[62] Augustine was, thus, clearly aware of the contemporary classifications of virtue, and read them into Plato.

Another cluster of indirect references to Plato is to be found in Augustine's repeated statement that Plato said that "to philosophize is to love God", as philosophy seeks the highest good, which is God.[63] Hence, according to Plato, the wise person is an "imitator, knower and lover of God".[64] This formula is not Plato's own, although one can see how it relies on a combined reading of passages such as *Symp.* 188 d and *Tht.* 176 b. The source is, most probably, a lost work of Porphyry, whose *Ad Marcellam* (esp. c. 15 and 17) comes close to the point Augustine is ascribing to Plato.

From this evidence, it may be clear that to a large extent, Augustine's knowledge of Plato was reliant upon Neoplatonic sources that had already made a specific integration of Platonic materials, even though Augustine ventured

61 Plotinus, *Enn.* I 2, esp. I 2, 2.13–16 (on the civic virtues). See also Porphyry, *Sent.* 32.

62 *Liber XXI sententiarum* c. 15a, l. 248–51 Dolbeau. For more details on this point, see Van Riel 2012, 402.

63 *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 8: *Nunc satis sit commemorare Platonem determinasse finem boni esse secundum uirtutem uiuere et ei soli euenire posse, qui notitiam Dei habeat et imitationem nec esse aliam ob causam beatum; ideoque non dubitat hoc esse philosophari, amare Deum, cuius natura sit incorporalis. ... Ipsum autem uerum ac summum bonum Plato dicit Deum, unde uult esse philosophum amatorem Dei, ut, quoniam philosophia ad beatam uitam tendit, fruens Deo sit beatus qui Deum amauerit.* Cf. *Ciu. Dei* VII, 11: *Plato dicit amatorem Dei esse philosophum.*

64 *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 5: *Plato Dei huius imitatorem cognitorem amatorem dixit esse sapientem, cuius participatione sit beatus.*

to add Platonic references of his own. Yet there are places where Augustine points out the difference between Plato himself and what the Platonists made of him. Sometimes, this safeguards Plato from a mistake made by subsequent Platonists,[65] but the contrary also applies, particularly with regard to Plato's statement that the human soul can transmigrate into the body of animals (*Ciu. Dei* X, 30). Augustine here agrees with Porphyry, who rejects the theory of Plato and Plotinus on this point, and he is happy to conclude, with a mocking reference to the proverb *amicus Plato, sed magis amica ueritas*:

> Here we have a Platonist adopting a different view from Plato's, and a better one. Mark him well! He saw what Plato failed to see. Nor did he, coming after so great, so wise a master, boggle at correcting his error. He loved truth more than the man.[66]

Apart from his direct access to the pagan Platonists, Augustine's knowledge of Platonism was obviously also imprinted by the fusion of Platonism and Christianity that had taken place long before him. Under the influence of Origen, among others, Augustine became aware of many specific Platonic doctrines that were useful in articulating Christian theology. The doctrine of formless matter is an example of this kind of indirect borrowing. This theory of formless matter was elaborated rather early in the Platonic tradition, obviously based on a reading of the *Timaeus* that attempted to integrate Aristotelian ontology into the Platonic Receptacle.[67] In any case, this theory of formless matter found

65 See, e.g., his reaction against Apuleius' demonology: *Tu autem hoc didicisti non a Platone, sed a Chaldaeis magistris* (*Ciu. Dei* X, 27). More interesting is his reaction against the Neoplatonists at *Ciu. Dei* X, 31, on the interpretation of *Tim.* 41 b: Plato most clearly says, Augustine maintains, that the gods came into being and had a beginning. Porphyry would explain this away as not referring to a temporal beginning, but to the beginning of an ontological dependence (*substitutionis initium*), as something that has no end in time cannot have a beginning in time either. Augustine replies that two counterexamples can easily be found: the soul's misery and happiness, neither of which are there from the beginning, yet both are everlasting.

66 *Ciu. Dei* X, 30: *Quod si ita est, ecce Platonicus in melius a Platone dissentit; ecce uidit quod ille non uidit, nec post talem ac tantum magistrum refugit correctionem, sed homini praeposuit ueritatem.* At *Ciu. Dei* XXII, 27, Augustine again opposes Plato to Porphyry, claiming that each of them had a partial grasp of the truth, whereas the combination of their views would turn them into Christians.

67 See also Cicero, *Lucullus*, 118: *Plato ex materia in se omnia recipiente mundum factum esse censet a deo sempiternum*; Apuleius, *De Plat.* I, 5: *materia inabsoluta, informis, nulla specie nec qualitatis significatione distincta.*

its way into the Greek books of the Old Testament,[68] and served as a starting point not only for Philo and Origen, but also for Platonizing gnostic sects and heretics (e.g. Hermogenes). From there it made its way (despite opponents like Tertullian and Ambrose) into Augustine's exegesis of Genesis 1.1–2 in *Confessions* XII, despite the fact that some of the sources were heterodox.[69]

This is only one example in which Augustine makes a "Platonic" point, even in opposition to the standard exegesis of the Latin theologians who rejected the theory of formless matter because it would presuppose that matter predated the Creation. Instead, they promulgated a strictly literal reading of the first verses of Genesis. Augustine would obviously not go so far as to defend the pre-existence of matter, but he did not shy from using heterodox materials to prove his point either. All of this amounts to saying how far the integration of Platonic and Christian doctrines had evolved, and that the dynamic had not yet come to an end in Augustine's days: indeed, he entitled the Christians to take over from the philosophers (and first and foremost the Platonists: *maxime Platonici*) whatever may be true and useful to Christian faith (*De doctrina Christiana* II, 40.60).

On the other hand, this also leads to a critical attitude opposed to the all-too-easy Christian statement that the pagans, including Plato, could only be so close to Christianity because they knew of the biblical revelation and were taught by prophets. Augustine knew Ambrose's famous claim that Plato went to Egypt and was taught by the prophet Jeremiah who was there at the time.[70] Augustine initially subscribed to this theory,[71] but he eventually rejected it for reasons of historical accuracy: "A careful calculation of dates according to chronology shows that Plato was born about one hundred years after the time when Jeremiah uttered his prophecies". (*Ciu. Dei* VIII, 11). He nonetheless concludes that Plato must have had some knowledge of Scripture after all, even if he did not hear Jeremiah himself.

In a way similar to his borrowings from the pagan Neoplatonists, Augustine had recourse to clusters of knowledge about Plato that he took from Christian authors. An interesting case is Augustine's use of Plato's expulsion of the poets from the ideal state in *Republic* II. In his rejection of pagan demonology, Augustine advocates Plato's reaction against the poets.[72] His argument is

68 LXX Sap. 11, 17: κτίσασα τὸν κόσμον ἐξ ἀμόρφου ὕλης.

69 For further details, see Van Riel (2007).

70 Ambrose, *Expositio de psalmo* 118, 18, 4; *De Noë et arca* VIII, 24. Also Origen *CC* IV, 39.

71 *Doctrina Christiana* II, 28, 43.

72 *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 13: *Quid enim de ludis scaenicis Plato senserit, notum est, cum poetas ipsos, quod tam indigna deorum maiestate atque bonitate carmina composuerunt, censet ciuitate pellendos*. Cf. also *Ibid.* VIII, 14 and 21.

always constructed around the idea that by this expulsion, Plato deprived the demons of the pleasures of theatre. The gods themselves remain unaffected, as there is no possible mingling between gods and humans: *Ciu. Dei* VIII, 14: (*dei*) *quos ab omni humana contagione semouit*, with an implicit reference to *Symposium* 203 a: θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μείγνυται. The source of this reminiscence is Apuleius' *De deo Socratis*, c. 4: *ut idem Plato ait, nullus deus miscetur hominibus*.[73] The case becomes even more interesting if one looks for the source where Augustine found the information on the expulsion of the poets. He will have known Plato's project of the *Republic* through Cicero's *De Republica*, but in Cicero's extant works, no mention is made of the particular context of the reaction against the poets. It is referred to, however, by Tertullian, *Ad nationes* II, 7, which may well have been the place where Augustine found it (without the context of demonology). This cluster of arguments and collected references clearly shows the creativity with which Augustine combined the partial information he found in his sources. The clustered presence of these references reveals, moreover, that they were probably brought together in Augustine's hypomnemata.

Also pertaining to the *Republic*, Augustine knew of Plato's precept that the philosophers would share their women: "The philosopher Plato was rightfully disapproved of, as he thought women should be held in common in that state which he constructs as the perfect one in his dialogue".[74] Once again, the source is not Cicero (at least not his extant works), but the reference can be found in a Christian source: Jerome refers to this passage twice. On both occasions, he sets Plato in line with the *Scoti*, who also shared their women among each other. Jerome's contempt is at least as clear as Augustine's, stating that they "are loose as cattle" (*pecudum more lasciuiunt*).[75]

Taking stock of the various examples we have been surveying, we may conclude that Augustine's borrowings from the Platonic tradition do not necessarily bring us closer to Plato himself. As in the case of formless matter, it is clear that he is borrowing an academic interpretation of Plato. In the context

73 Cf. *Ciu. Dei* IX, 16: *non enim uerum est, quod idem Platonicus* [i.e. Apuleius] *ait Platonem dixisse: 'nullus deus miscetur homini'*.

74 *C. Iul. imperf.* VI, 22: *Philosophus Plato iure displicuit, quia permixte censuit utendum feminis in ea ciuitate quam disputando uelut optimam format.*

75 Hieronymus, *Adversus Jovinianum* II, 7: *Scotorum natio uxores proprias non habet: et quasi Platonis Politiam legerit, et Catonis sectetur exemplum, nulla apud eos coniux propria est, sed ut cuique libitum fuerit, pecudum more lasciuiunt. Epist.* 69, c. 3: *Scottorum et Aticottorum* [a Celtic tribe in Gaul] *ritu ac De republica Platonis promiscuas uxores, communes liberos habeant.*

of *Confessions* XII, he nowhere refers to the *Timaeus* directly, as indeed there is no such thing as formless matter in Plato himself. Likewise, his reading of the Platonic virtues presupposes Neoplatonic and Stoic ethics. Yet that should not come as a surprise, nor should it be held against Augustine. It is common, and inevitably so, to read and interpret authors along the prevailing interpretation that is "in the air" when one gets to know the sources. In the case of Augustine's Plato, this yields a remarkable amalgam, depending on where he got his information from. The readings he takes over from Cicero and Apuleius bear the imprint of Sceptic and Middle Platonic interpretations (such as, for example, the predilection for the *Timaeus*, or the identification of the Demiurge with the Christian Creator, etc.) whereas the references retrieved from Neoplatonic sources are obviously relying on a Neoplatonic interpretation (e.g., Augustine's siding with Plotinus in rejecting the Middle Platonic vocabulary of the Forms as reasons, or Augustine's treatment of the Platonic virtues), and the references from his Christian sources are ruminated within Christianity (e.g. the theory of formless matter, or the rejection of demonology and the interpretation of the creation of the young gods at *Tim.* 41 b), whereby again the different stages and interpretations of Platonism will have determined the specific reading of Plato. Yet, despite all that, Augustine remains a scholar who is aware of a doctrinal distance between Plato and later "Platonists", as is evidenced by his attempts to distinguish between Plato and the Platonists, and also by his critical attitude towards Christian revisions of the history of philosophy (as in the case of Ambrose).

All evidence points in the direction that Augustine was a creative reader of Plato, compiling his information on the basis of different source texts. The way in which the quotations are used (in clusters of interpretive units) seems to indicate that Augustine had them available as some kind of hypomnemata, "cards" that contained basic and essential information, and to which he had recourse when composing his works.

CHAPTER 25

Orthodoxy and Allegory: Syrianus' Metaphysical Hermeneutics

Sarah Klitenic Wear

I Introduction: Syrianus' Exegetical Principles

In his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, Proclus, dissatisfied with the opinions of his predecessors on Plato, says the following: "But if none of the aforementioned views express the meaning of Plato, what are we to say reveals it? It is better here once again to take refuge in the opinion of our Master".[1] Proclus turns to Syrianus, his master, whom he frequently regards as the only reader to correctly grasp the meaning of Plato's text.[2] In Proclus' commentaries Syrianus' readings are frequently contrasted with those of other commentators, such as Iamblichus and Porphyry, and are often heralded as a return to the true and originary sense of Plato's text – a sense that most other commentators had drifted away from in their elaborations. This, however, implies no real criticism of those who have

1 Proclus, *in Tim.* III 203.32ff (=Syrianus, *in Tim.* fr. 22 Wear). Subsequent translations are those of Wear unless otherwise noted.

2 The passages below illustrate Proclus' view that Syrianus gives the correct reading of Plato. I quote several of them because the frequency with which he endorses Syrianus' reading is so striking. *in Tim.* I.310.3ff (=Syrianus, *in Tim.* F) 60 "Come now, let us recount the theories of our Master on the question, which we consider particularly to accord with the thought of Plato." *in Tim.* I 374.2ff (=Syrianus, *in Tim.* fr.9): "we may address [this difficulty] by fastening on to these actual words of Plato, in accord with our Master …"; *in Tim.* II 105.28ff (=Syrianus, *in Tim.* fr. 13): "As for our Teacher, he produces an interpretation more suitable to the words of Plato." *in Tim.* III 278.9 (=Syrianus, *in Tim.* fr. 25): "But there is another account more accurate even than this, that our Master used to expound …"; *in Parm.* 1033.17 (=Syrianus *in Parm.* fr. 2); "But if one is to get nearest to the truth, one must follow the line of our Master, that Parmenides begins from the One …"; *in Parm.* 1114.29ff (=Syrianus, *in Parm.* fr. 4); "These views, as I have said, are quite correct. But our Master has solved the objection still more perfectly …"; *in Parm.* 1118.24ff (=*in Parm.* fr.5); "We are very strongly influenced by our own Master, who in this passage as we has very accurately tracked down the intention of Plato …"; *in Parm.* 1142.9ff (=*in Parm.* fr. 6); "Better then, following the lead of my own Father, to proceed along that most sensible and safest course…". All passages from the *in Parm.* are from Morrow and Dillon (1987).

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mistaken the true meaning of Plato's text as Proclus believes that Syrianus is an especially gifted reader of the dialogues. For example, Proclus endorses Syrianus' view of the significance of the missing guest at the opening of Plato's *Timaeus*.

> *In Tim.* I 20.27–32 (= Syrianus *In Tim.* fr.1 Wear)
> But we should relate the judgment of our Master on this question, since it accords particularly well with the doctrine of Plato. He said then, that in so much as the exposition concerns more holy and exalted matters, in corresponding measure the number of pupils is diminished and the discourse proceeds in a manner more secret and ineffable.

In other words, it should come as no surprise if lesser men have missed the true meaning of Plato. Plato's dialogues do not yield their secrets to just anyone. Syrianus' unusually authoritative role as an interpreter of Plato is explained – at least for Proclus – by Syrianus' own views about the means through which Plato's dialogues communicate.

It is unfortunate that we can no longer read Syrianus' commentaries on Plato to see the basis for Proclus' great confidence in his teacher's ability to correctly understand Plato. While there are no extant commentaries on Plato's dialogues by Syrianus,[3] we do have lecture notes on the *Phaedrus* by Syrianus' student, Hermias.[4] In my work I have also isolated testimonia on Syrianus' teachings on the *Phaedo, Philebus, Parmenides*, and *Timaeus* in the commentaries of Proclus, Damascius, and Olympiodorus.[5] Such testimonia will form the basis for the study of Syrianus' reading of Plato in this article, particularly the metaphysical interpretation Syrianus gives to Plato's text in these dialogues.

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3 Among Syrianus' surviving work, we have only his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* books 3, 4, 13, and 14, as well as commentary on two rhetorical treatises by Hermogenes of Tarsus. We know that Syrianus also wrote systematic treatises on Orphic and Chaldaean theology, which is hardly surprising given the importance of these texts for the Athenian school in the fifth century. The curriculum of the school was organized so that students began with reading Aristotle, then moved on to Plato's dialogues (with *Parm.* and *Tim.* considered the highest works on physical and theological doctrines), and ended with the reading of Orphic and Chaldaean theology. For a discussion of Syrianus' written works, see *The Suda* (IV 478, 21); Zeller (1903), 818; Sheppard (1980), 46; Cardullo (1986), 112–14; Manolea (2004), 44–45, and most recently, Longo (2012), 617–18.

4 Because of the difficulty with separating Hermias' hermeneutics from Syrianus', this article will only deal with the testimonia of Syrianus on Platonic dialogues and will not include a discussion of Hermias' commentary on *Phdr.* I also only briefly treat testimonia from Proclus' *in Remp.*, as they primarily discuss Homeric poetry.

5 For a list of Syrianus' testimonia on *Tim., Parm., Phd.,* and *Phlb.*, see the appendix.

Fundamental to Proclus' grounds for upholding Syrianus' unique insight into the thought of Plato is Syrianus' close reading of the text. He operates with the principle that Platonic texts, particularly the *Parmenides* and *Timaeus*, contain sacred metaphysical truths whose content is not transparent to the casual reader. With this in mind, Syrianus criticizes predecessors for omitting phrases from Plato or not considering particular words or lines from a given lemma in their interpretation. The hidden meaning of Plato's philosophy suffuses the text so completely that no part can be safely neglected.

Proclus' testimonia illustrate how Syrianus' readings closely track the text. In one example, Proclus says: "Our teacher, however, first wished to bring our attention to the fact that Plato himself added the phrase 'in order that they might be engendered with the best possible natures…'".[6] Here, Syrianus finds it problematic that his predecessors did not consider both parts of a sentence – here, a purpose clause – in a reading of lemma.[7] This adherence to a close reading of the text underscores the sacred nature of the Platonic text for Syrianus – for "our master", every word and phrase of Plato must be scrutinized, as it contained divine teaching on the universe.

The example of the missing participant at the opening of the *Timaeus* illustrates another feature of Syrianus' approach to Plato: allegory. The idea that Plato's works require an allegorical reading based in metaphysics is nothing new. Iamblichus too reads Plato's works as allegories on the universe. Thus, Syrianus' understanding of Plato relies heavily upon such interpretations by Iamblichus, modified to accord with his own views of the universe. While he regularly critiques Porphyry's view, he also amalgamates portions of Porphyry's reading into his understanding of the text, creating a portmanteau exegesis from a combined reading of Iamblichus and Porphyry. Proclus recognizes Syrianus' method, saying, "On the basis of the teaching of our Master, we may at any rate make clear his judgment that considers both schools of opinion to speak rightly."[8]

Two things distinguish Syrianus' allegorical readings of Plato from those of Iamblichus and Porphyry. First, Syrianus resembles Iamblichus in offering allegorical readings that shed light on questions in metaphysics.[9] Plato's text may,

6 *In Tim.* I.51.13ff (=Syrianus, *In Tim.* fr.2 Wear) (trans.) Wear.

7 Syrianus' reading of *Parm.* 144C4–5 is based on the significance of the particle "*ge*". See Damascius *in Parm.* 238, II 75.18–22 W–C. (=Syrianus, *in Parm.* fr. 12 Wear).

8 *in Parm.* 1117.18ff (=Syrianus *in Parm.* fr. 7 Wear) (trans.) Morrow and Dillon.

9 Syrianus gives a metaphysical exegesis of Platonic dialogues to the extent that Proclus calls his reading "θεολογικώτερον". See Syrianus, *in Met.* 183.15ff; 81.11; Proclus, *in Parm.* 1061.28; 618.8ff; Sheppard (1980), 41. Sheppard says that there are good grounds for thinking that allegory of Homer in terms of metaphysics can first be attributed to Syrianus Sheppard (1980), 47.

in his view, also support an ethical allegorical reading – one that focuses on the soul and its fate – of the sort typically offered by Porphyry. Nevertheless, the text's meaning is not exhausted by the ethical reading. Second, metaphysical or theological allegories like those offered by Syrianus and Iamblichus relate features of Plato's text to (putative) features of the intelligible world that feature in the interpreter's own view of that world. Proclus' frequent preference for Syrianus as the superior interpreter of Plato is thus a preference for Syrianus' metaphysical system over that of, say, Iamblichus. In addition, his metaphysical allegories of Plato often relate the thought of Plato to words and phrases from Homer or to Orphic names. He maps these features of the sacred texts subject to interpretation to metaphysical principles within his own account of the universe.[10] Within this context Syrianus seems to have given particular attention to the relationship of any given entity to the One and the One's relation to the One-Being. Based on his reading of Plato's *Phaedo, Parmenides, Philebus, and Timaeus*, it is clear, moreover, that Syrianus was primarily concerned with justifying his unique system of interlocking levels and hence, frequently shows how Plato's text (under the correct allegorical reading, of course!) explains how one level of being relates to another. In this way, Syrianus uses the authority of Plato to underscore the validity of his own metaphysical system. To the extent that our evidence allows us to judge, this basic approach is not unique to Syrianus, but was anticipated by Iamblichus. What marks Syrianus out as the more authoritative Platonist in the eyes of his student, Proclus, is, first, the much more systematic approach that Syrianus took to interpreting every feature of Plato's semantically dense text and, second, the superiority of the metaphysical system which Syrianus supposed to be revealed by his allegorical approach to Plato.

II Syrianus on Plato's *Phaedo*: Textual Fidelity and Its Limits

Syrianus' views on the *Phaedo* discussed by Damascius and Olympiodorus[11] illustrate these key aspects of Syrianus' approach to reading Plato. Even though Syrianus deliberately shows that he understands the scope of a given lemma – the very attentiveness to the text that makes Proclus regard him as the best reader of Plato – philosophically, he finds it impossible to separate the

10 Sheppard points to Proclus' use of the terms ἐνθεαστικός and ἐνθεάζειν used of transcendent metaphysical allegory; for Proclus, Syrianus' understanding of myth is inspired and penetrating (*in Crat.* 183 pp. 109.22–111.20). See Sheppard (1980), 62 and Friedl (1936), 96.

11 Damascius, *in Phd.* I 183–252; Olympiodorus, *in Phd.* 9–10.

understanding of a particular lemma from the totality of Platonist doctrine. This creates a tension in Syrianus's exegesis which is evident in both Damascius' and Olympiodorus' assessment of him.

In Plato's *Phaedo* 69e6–70c5, Cebes demands that Socrates prove the immortality of the soul separately from his description of soul as an entity detached from the body. Cebes asks Socrates for some evidence for the idea that "the soul of a man exists after death and possesses any power and intelligence" (70b2–4). Socrates proposes to consider simply whether the soul exists in Hades after a person dies and attempts to show this by means of the argument from opposites. The crucial premise is "whatever has an opposite will come about from its opposite and from it only" (*Phd.* 70e4–6).[12] Socrates illustrates this premise with examples and identifies the processes of transition between the opposites (e.g. heating and cooling are the processes through which the opposites hot and cold come to be from one another). He infers the existence of corresponding processes in the case of the opposites "alive" and "dead". One of these is evident: we see people dying (i.e. passing from being alive to being dead). So there must be coming to life again and thus souls exist in Hades (71d14–e2). Socrates then anticipates the objection that being alive and being dead might be exceptions to the general principle of opposites. He replies, first, that such an exception would make nature "lop-sided" (71e9) and this possibility is one that Cebes simply rejects. Second, he argues against the lop-sided possibility by means of a *reductio*. If this were the case, then all things would eventually become dead (72c5–d3). This is a specific illustration of the general principle that natural processes must be cyclical, for otherwise "everything would wind up with the same form and undergo the same thing and they would cease coming to be" (72b4–5). Though he does not say so explicitly, it seems clear that such a cessation of genesis is regarded by Socrates and his interlocuters as something impossible. In *in Phd.* I 183–206, Damascius summarizes Syrianus' monograph on the argument from opposites and it is digested in very similar terms by Olympiodorus in his *Phaedo Commentary*.[13]

In his discussion of the argument from opposites Syrianus adapts Iamblichus' metaphysical interpretation, though he alters its focus. According to Damasicus in his commentary, Iamblichus used the argument from opposites

12 Damascius *in Phd.* I 183–206 include a summary of Syrianus' monograph on the argument from opposites; cited by Olympiodorus 9.2.8–10 and refuted by Damascius I 207–252.

13 Olympiodorus presents Syrianus' argument that the living and the dead proceed from each other: "Life and death are integration and dissociation, these two are opposites, and opposites pass into each other; therefore the living and the dead also pass into each other." (Olympiodorus, *In Phd.* I 10.3.19–4.1) (trans.) Westerink.

to prove the soul's *complete immortality* (Damascius, *in Phd.* I 207.5); likewise, Olympiodorus credits Iamblichus with the premise that the living and dead arise out of each other and do so *eternally*, making the soul *eternal* (Olympiodorus, *in Phd.* 2.3).[14] Hence, for Iamblichus, the principle of eternal genesis gives rise to the principle of the immortal soul. Damascius, in his final discussion on Syrianus' monograph, says:

> Damascius *in Phd.* I 207.3–9
> The great Iamblichus, however, in a way characteristic of "that spirit of his", overshoots the mark by attempting to lend it such completeness as to constitute absolute proof of the immortality of the soul, which is more than Socrates himself dared to presume it could do. Then Syrianus, with that balance and proportion which he shows in all things, avoiding on the one hand the amateurish perplexity of earlier generations and moderating the boldness of Iamblichus on the other, tried to keep within the limits of Socrates' professed intention while at the same time refuting those who ridicule the argumentation and proving them guilty of chicanery. (trans.) Westerink

In this passage, Damascius juxtaposes Syrianus' method of interpretation with Iamblichus'. Syrianus is credited for his closer reading of the text itself, and thus a more faithful interpretation of the teachings of Socrates. Iamblichus, however, is critiqued for surpassing the conclusions Socrates himself drew in his own argument. Syrianus recognized this as a problem. In his own monograph, he tells us that the proof is only required to show that the soul remains in Hades (Damascius, *in Phd.* I 183.4–6; Olympiodorus, *In Phd.* 10.1.11–12) – not anything additional. Still, it is also clear that Syrianus does not criticize Iamblichus sharply, and instead aims simply to tone his reading down. In clarifying the limits of Iamblichus' argument, Syrianus, however, relies upon his broader understanding of Platonist metaphysics. That is to say that, like Iamblichus, he reads a larger philosophical argument into Plato's lemma. Syrianus says that the argument from opposites proves the immortality (*athanaton*) of the soul, only if one also assumes that there is always the world of generation. Without this assumption, the argument would be invalid (Damascius, *in Phd.* I 205–6). Taken simply on its own terms, the argument proves only that the soul has no point of first generation (*agenetos*). (Damascius, *in Phd.*

14 Iamblichus *in Phd.* fr. 3: "For Iamblichus considers that either argument by itself demonstrates the immortality of the soul; for if, he says, the living and the dead arise out of each other and do this eternally, the soul will thus be eternal …" (trans.) Dillon.

I 206.1–2). If we think of the soul as simply coming into being at a certain moment, without any previous association with a body, and then becoming conjoined to a body, then it will no longer be true that the living proceed from the dead (I 204.4–7).

Yet Syrianus does not doubt that Socrates accepts the genesis is everlasting and his exegesis of *Phaedo* 72a12–b5 appeals to the full panoply of Platonic metaphysics. Damascius reports his views in these terms:

> Damascius, *in Phd.* I 202
> The argument is based on three postulates: (1) that all things move in circles, imitating intelligence; (2) that soul is stronger than body; (3) that all things long for the good and aspire to everlasting existence either as individuals, or as kinds, or in a mode that participates of both. In other words, it is based on the three primal hypostases, Intelligence, Potency, the Good. (trans.) Westerink

While Syrianus shows the lemma's limits, he also makes it clear that the lemma is best understood in light of a full teaching on the doctrine of the soul. It is on this basis that Damascius goes on to criticize him. He begins his criticism after his initial praise of Syrianus, saying:

> Damascius, *in Phd.* I 207.9–16
> On the whole, [Syrianus] has defined the problems and stated the assumptions in a way satisfactory to me and in accordance with his usual high standard, "yet has he not reached the final end of word." For he needs many extraneous elements not expressed in the text, and after saying first that the argument proves a possibility, he ends by lending it compulsive force, a force as strong as the necessity that holds the world together; and besides, he does not show this force at work in all cases, which was Socrates' claim [70d7–e6], but in the generation of human beings only, and even there not without restriction but only as far as the soul is concerned. (trans.) Westerink[15]

15 τὰ μὲν οὖν ἄλλα διωρίσατο καὶ προωμολογήσατο κατὰ νοῦν τε ἐμοὶ καὶ ἑαυτῷ εἰωθότως, 'ἀτὰρ οὐ τέλος ἵκετο μύθων'. πολλῶν τε γὰρ ἐπεισοδίων ἐδεήθη μὴ κειμένων ἐν τῷ λόγῳ, καὶ ἐνδεχόμεν ον εἶναι τὸν λόγον προειπὼν ἐτελεύτησεν αὐτοῦ προϊὼν εἰς τὴν ἀνάγκην, ἴσην γε ἀνάγκην τῇ τοῦ κόσμου συστάσει· καὶ οὐδὲ ταύτην κοινὴν ἐπὶ πάντων ἀπέφηνεν, ὥσπερ ὁ Σωκράτης ἠξίωσεν [70d7–e6], ἀλλ' ἐπὶ μόνων τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων γενέσεων, οὐδὲ τούτων ὅλων, ἀλλὰ μόνον τῶν ἀλλ' ἐπὶ μόνων τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων γενέσεων, οὐδὲ τούτων ὅλων, ἀλλὰ μόνον τῶν περὶ ψυχήν.

Damascius' criticism of Syrianus is thus similar to the one he lodged against Iamblichus; namely, that they both discuss assumptions not found in the *Phaedo*. While Syrianus himself tries to stay close to the text, it is clear that he also thinks that we best understand the argument if we interpret it against the background assumption that the soul is co-eternal with an everlasting world of generation.[16] For Syrianus, the best understanding of Plato takes into account the entirety of Platonic teachings on the soul. So while he is committed to *neglecting* no detail of the Platonic text (a practice for which Proclus praises him) he also fails to *confine himself* simply to the text at hand (a practice for which Damascius criticizes him). Unlike his predecessor Iamblichus, however, Syrianus makes it clear when he needs to include a broader understanding of Platonist metaphysics in order to understand a narrow lemma.[17] Aware of Iamblichus' hermeneutics, Syrianus responds by explaining why he must go beyond the text at times.

III Finding Symbols of Divine Orders in Plato's *Parmenides* and *Philebus*

According to Syrianus, Plato's dialogues contain words which function as symbols, pointing to a higher understanding of divine beings and orders of beings. This is certainly true of the *Parmenides*, the scope of which, Syrianus says, is "*all* things" and not merely Being or real beings.[18] As a result, the *Parmenides* portrays the entire universe when read correctly.[19] Syrianus says that Plato reveals the structure of the universe in the *Parmenides* and that he, Syrianus, will act as a Bacchant with Plato – both of whom are "filled with divine truth" to understand the divine doctrines on the structure hidden in the text. Proclus adds

16 Gertz (2011), 88.

17 See this similar technique used in Syrianus's interpretation of Agamemenon's dream, which must be understood in light of Neoplatonic principles of divine providence. See Proclus, *in Remp*. 116.1 ff, particularly in contrast to Proclus views on this section, 116.8. Sheppard (1980), 59.

18 Proclus, *in Parm*. 640.13–641.4 (= Syrianus, *In Parm*. fr. 1 Wear)

19 Proclus, *in Parm*. 618 where Proclus says that all the orders of divine beings help him to prepare fully to share in the mystical vision that Plato reveals in *Parm.* Struck points to Proclus' *Parm.* commentary (848–53), "run-of-the-mill names operate by convention when they name sensible things but by direct ontological connection when they designate the higher-order brings of which physical names are a reflection." See Struck (2004), 238.

that Syrianus came "as the exact image of philosophy" to aid men in reading Plato, as the chief author of salvation which will raise them up.[20]

This volume has already discussed the centrality of the *Parmenides* for Neoplatonism. One of Syrianus' contributions to the exegesis of this dialogue is the idea that the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* presents us with a panoramic view of all the various levels of divinities. He comes to this conclusion through a proper reading of the "symbols" placed in Plato's *Parmenides*:

> Proclus, *in Parm.* 1061.25–1062.9 (= *in Parm.* fr. 3 Wear)
> [Syrianus'] view also is that the first hypothesis is about the primal God, and the second is about the intelligible world. But since there is a wide range in the intelligible world and there are many orders of gods, his view is that each of these divine orders has been named symbolically [*symbolikōs*] by Plato, and all have been expressed by philosophic names, not by such names as are customarily celebrated by those who compose theogonies, but which do not reveal their essences, such as are the epithets of the divine classes given out by the gods, but rather, as I said, by names familiar to philosophers, such as Whole, Multiplicity, Limitlessness, Limit, which are suitable for application to them, all having their proper rank, and portraying without omission all the divine stages of procession, whether intelligible, intellectual, or supracosmic, and that thus all things are presented in logical order [*logikōs*], as being symbols [*symbola*] of divine orders of being [...].[21] (trans.) Morrow-Dillon

Thus, according to Syrianus' interpretive principles, Plato placed symbols, arranged in a logical order, in his text and when read correctly, these symbols present his understanding of the universe.[22] More particularly, the symbols

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20 Cf. Proclus, *PT* I, 1 pp. 7–8, where Proclus calls Syrianus a "hierophant" and *in Remp.* I, 71.2.

21 Δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ δὴ καὶ αὐτῷ τήν τε πρώτην ὑπόθεσιν εἶναι περὶ θεοῦ τοῦ πρωτίστου, καὶ τὴν δευτέραν περὶ τῶν νοητῶν· ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ πλάτος ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς καὶ πολλαὶ αἱ τάξεις εἰσὶ τῶν θεῶν, ἑκάστην τούτων τῶν θείων τάξεων συμβολικῶς ὑπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ὀνομάζεσθαι, καὶ πάσας δι' ὀνομάτων φιλοσόφων ἐκφέρεσθαι, καὶ οὔτε εἰωθότων ὑπὸ τῶν τὰς θεογονίας γραψάντων ὑμνεῖσθαι οὔτε τῶν τὰς ὑπάρξεις αὐτῶν δηλούντων, οἷαι δή εἰσιν αἱ ὑπάρξεις αὐτῶν δηλούντων, οἷαι δή εἰσιν αἱ παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἐκδεδομέναι τῶν θείων ἐπωνυμίαι γενῶν· ἀλλ', ὡς ἔφην, διὰ τῶν γνωρίμων τοῖς φιλοσόφοις, οἷον ὁλότητος, πλήθους, ἀπειρίας, πέρατος, οἰκείως ἐχόντων πρὸς αὐτὰς παραδίδοσθαι, τάξιν ἐχόντων πρέπουσαν, καὶ πάσας ἀπαραλείπτως ἀφερμηνεύεσθαι τὰς θείας προόδους, νοητὰς, νοερὰς, ὑπερκοσμίους, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο παραλαμβάνεσθαι ἑπόμενα πάντα, σύμβολα τῶν θείων ὄντα διακόσμων.

22 On sacred writings as symbols of the divine, see Proclus, *in Tim.* III 243.8–13. See also Proclus, *in Remp.* I 111.16–27 and *in Tim.* I 352.11–19 which discusses how the highest

here tell us that what is denied of the One in the first hypothesis is asserted of the One-Being of the second hypothesis.[23] Thus, Syrianus supposes that the different attributes predicated of the "One that is" symbolically represent the series of divine classes.[24] Furthermore, each of these names, according to Syrianus, indicates a rank and a divine stage of procession without any omission. Plato has left nothing out. Thus, Syrianus provides an explanation that in each level of being, a different attribute of the One becomes manifested. Each attribute indicates a separate level in the realm of One-Being – thus, only these things can be said to be denied of the One, which rises above One-Being. Proclus clarifies this position in 1087.1ff, explaining that the attributes of the realm of One-Being must be denied of the One. We declare that the One does not exist, the apodosis of Plato's lemma, "if then there is a One, then this One does not exist" – then, the attributes of the second hypothesis are all attributes regarding being.[25] In this way, the *Parmenides*, for Syrianus, shows the theological reader how to understanding the entire universe, particularly how to understand the relationship between the One and the One-Being.

Syrianus displays similar exegetical techniques when understanding the three monads of the *Philebus*, which he says must stand for the three hypostases.[26] Syrianus treats the three monads of Truth, Beauty, and Proportion from *Philebus* 64a7–65a5 by understanding each monad as actually representing a different level of reality.[27] Damascius gives Iamblichus' interpretation of the

levels of reality contain language synonymous with power and divine speech and the lower levels have disjunctive speech.

23 *in Parm.* 1062. 9–14: "all those things which are presented positively in the second hypothesis are presented negatively in the first indicates that the primal cause transcends all the divine orders, while they undergo various degrees of procession according to their distinct characteristics." (trans.) Morrow-Dillon.

24 Steel (2009b), 204; Proclus adopts this view in *PT* 1. 4, 20.20–23.

25 Syrianus, thus, in this passage shows a trajectory following the views of Amelius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus, who see the hypotheses of *Parm.* as describing intelligible reality. Where Syrianus innovates is that he prioritizes the relationship between One and One-Being by dividing the hypotheses into those which describe One-Being and those which describe the One – these hypotheses, moreover, are simply versions of each other. Thus, the One is described foremost as containing and surpassing One-Being. In so far as we can speak about the One, we speak about its relationship with One-Being.

26 On Damascius' method of interpretation, see Damascius, *in Phlb.*; *PA*, I 64.8–13; 64.19–22; 65.21–66.2, 71.1–2; 305.14–306.1. See also Rappe (2010), 376–81; van Riel (2000), 141–75.

27 See also Proclus, *in Remp.* I, p. 295.19–24 where the three monads of the *Phlb.* bring us to the Good because of their affinity with the Good. Combès shows how the three monads are used by Proclus to describe the manner in which they affect us as the beginning of mystical union; Combès (1987), 177–90.

three monads: "Iamblichus, too, says that the three monads proceeding from the Good have organized the Intelligence; but it does not appear, which Intelligence, whether the Intelligence that is posterior to Life, or that which is in Being and is celebrated as the Paternal Intelligence."[28] Iamblichus, according to Damascius, makes the claim that all three monads are revealed in Intellect, but he does not distinguish between whether he intends the *noeros nous* or the *patēr nous*, the intelligence of the first triad, indicated by a comment on the "mythical Egg" of Orphic literature.[29]

By contrast, Syrianus delineates the levels of the universe to which each of the three monads corresponds:

> Damascius, *in Phlb*. I 244
> Syrianus separates the three and regards Truth as first revealed in Being, inasmuch as it is entirely impregnated with its own essence and absolutely incapable of non-existence; Beauty as first present in Life, because Beauty is prolific and delights in self-development, for after the completely undifferentiated it is Life that carries in it the seeds of differentiation; Proportion in Intelligence, for here forms are first differentiated and harmoniously coordinated. (trans. Westerink)[30]

This is a symbolic reading of Plato's text. Since Syrianus supposes that the world is really founded in these three hypostases (and, of course, his reasons for thinking that are intimately connected to his understanding of Platonism broadly construed) he naturally supposes that important features of Plato's dialogues correspond to those hypostases.[31] This reading is uniquely Syrianic, in part, because the three monads are things revealed from the One-Being. Such a reading functions as an example of Syrianus's metaphysical interpretation of Plato's writings.[32]

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28 Damascius, *In Phlb*. 243 (trans.) Westerink.

29 Westerink (1982), 115.

30 Ὅτι Συριανὸς μερίζει· καὶ τὴν μὲν ἀλήθειαν ἐν τῷ ὄντι πρώτῳ θεωρεῖ ὡς πάντῃ διακορεῖ τοῦ εἶναι ὅ ἐστι καὶ οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς τὸ μὴ ὂν προσδεχομένῳ· τὸ δὲ κάλλος ἐν τῇ ζωῇ ὡς γόνιμόν τε καὶ προόδοις χαῖρον, μετὰ γὰρ τὸ πάντῃ ἀδιάκριτον οἷον ὠδῖνα περιφέρει διακρίσεως ἡ ζωή· τὴν δὲ συμμετρίαν ἐν τῷ νῷ ἅτε πρῶτον ἐν αὐτῷ τῶν εἰδῶν διακρινομένων καὶ ἐναρμονίως συντεταγμένων.

31 This is Syrianus' innovation to the interpretation of the three monads, which Combès indicates is a privileged relationship between truth and being, beauty and life, and proportion and intellect. See Combès (1987), 177.

32 Combès (1987), 177

Further symbolic associations are used by Syrianus to show how the three monads apply throughout the universe and are not merely to be identified with Being, Life and Intellect. For instance, for the principles following the One, Truth can be assigned to Limit likely because of its restrictive capabilities, Beauty to the Unlimited, based on its tendency towards development, and Proportion to Mixture (Damascius, *in Phlb*. 244.) Likewise, the three monads can be applied to grades of being. Syrianus applies Proportion to divisible substance because it is dimensional, indivisible substance to Truth because it has real being, and intermediate being corresponds to Beauty, as fusion between divisible and indivisible. Thus, the monads act like *peras* and *apeiria*, permeating the universe and acting upon entities. Just as *peras* grants limit and cohesion to entities, and *apeiria* unlimitedness, so too Beauty, Truth, and Proportion permeate the universe and endow it with various capacities. Beauty grants a generative capacity, Truth, an essential quality, and Proportion differentiates an entity and makes it recognizable as itself. In this way, Syrianus reads the three monads as metaphysical principles, like Iamblichus, but he also widens the interpretation to include attributes which can be applied as forces to entities throughout the universe.[33]

IV Allegory and Mythology in Plato's *Timaeus*

In his reading of the *Timaeus*, Syrianus connects Plato's description of the creation of the world with references to mythological gods and classes of divine beings. For he says, divine names in the *Timaeus* "unfold the whole essence of the things named, but those of men only partially come into contact with them".[34] Syrianus' allegorical reading of the *Timaeus* uses a number of Plato's texts, including the *Laws* and *Symposium*; in this way, Syrianus explains principles in the *Timaeus* using the whole of Plato's corpus as one coherent statement on metaphysics.

In *testimonia* on the *Timaeus*, Syrianus gives a literal reading of the *Timaeus*, followed by an allegorical understanding of several individual lemmata. For

33 Unfortunately, there is not room in this paper to explore Proclus' development of the three monads based on the premises set out by Syrianus in Damascius' *in Phlb.* For Proclus' interpretation of the three monads see: Proclus, *in Remp*. I 295.18–296.1; *PT* III 18, 63.16–17; *PT* III 9, 38.3–7; 11, 43.2–44.20; 13, 48.10–49.2; 18, 62.11–64.12; 22, 79.2–80.27; *in Tim*. II 267.11–24.

34 *in Tim*. I 274.6–9; cf. Struck (2004), 238.

instance, he considers *Tim.* 37e1–3, "he contrived the production of days and nights and months and years".[35] On this, Proclus says of his master:

> *in Tim.* III 35.25–27 = *in Tim.* fr. 18 (Wear)
> Let us then, in accordance with the theories of our Master, not for the purpose of denying the phenomena of the heavens (let us accept that *Timaeus* used this terminology also in the way that the many are accustomed to do) but referring these terms to higher levels of being, declare, as he was accustomed to do, that "day" and "night" are creative measures of time.[36] (trans.) Wear

For Syrianus, Plato uses the terms "day" and "night" to signify the invisible causes of day and night as measures of time. Thus, Day and Night are archetypes of the visible days and nights and contain the primordial causes of these measures of time. Syrianus makes the point that Plato uses "days" and "nights" in the plural to indicate that these are parts of archetypal Day and Night.[37] At a later line in this same passage, Syrianus says that Plato did not intend only these visible things when he said "day" and "night", but the things for which these visible things are "homonyms" (*homōnyma*),[38] a reading he finds based on *Laws* 899ab, where seasons and months are called divinities. Thus, Syrianus bases his understanding of *Tim.* 37de on a close reading of the text, paying attention to Plato's precise use of words, including grammar, such as the placing of those words in the plural. In addition, he uses another of Plato's works, the *Laws*, to contextualize his metaphysical reading of the *Timaeus*. This tendency

35 *in Tim.* III 35.25–36.33 (=Syrianus *in Tim.* fr. 18 Wear)

36 ἔστι τοίνυν, ὡς ὁ ἡμέτερος ἐφιλοσόφει πατήρ, οὐκ ἐπ' ἀναιρέσει<ς> τῶν φαινομένων (λεγέτω γὰρ καὶ ταῦτα ὁ Τίμαιος, ἃ καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς εἴωθε λέγεσθαι), ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὰς κυριωτέρας ὑποστάσεις καὶ ταῦτα ἀνάγων, ὥσπερ εἰώθει ποιεῖν, ἡμέρα μὲν καὶ νὺξ μέτρα τοῦ χρόνου δημιουργικά …

37 This interpretation is quite different than what is seen in Syrianus' interpretation of the gods in Proclus' *in Remp.* There, he associates Greek gods with particular tendencies and then he connects those tendencies to metaphysical forces. For instance, *in Remp.* 94.13, Syrianus associates providence with reason with Athena, and providence mixed with necessity with Ares. See also *in Crat.* 170, p. 93–94, where Proclus links Hera's connections with air and her connections with souls, saying that air is a symbol of the soul. Sheppard (1980), 56. See also Lamberton (2012).

38 Proclus discusses homonyms in *in Parm.* 852, 11 where he gives the example of "man" which can mean different things depending on its application. Man can be the likeness of intelligible reality or signify man as a sensible reality. When names act as *symbola* they engage the powers of similarity (*homoiôsis*) and become an image of their paradigm. See Wear (2007), 92.

to interpret one section of Plato's works with another is also seen in Syrianus' reading of *Tim.* 40d, "concerning the other divinities, to discover and declare their origin," for which he focuses on the phrase "other divinities", understanding them as daimones. In his commentary, Syrianus grapples with a difficulty in Plato's corpus; in *Symposium* 202e, Plato calls Eros a daimon, as being a follower of Aphrodite and as proceeding from Resource who is truly a god, but in the *Phaedrus* (242d) he postulates that Eros is a god. Syrianus shows consistency in Plato's thought by explaining that daimones are distinct from but also relate to the heavenly gods. Viewing the Platonic corpus as inherently coherent and non-contradictory, Syrianus solves a difficulty within the text of the *Timaeus* by using a solution posed in other Platonic dialogues, here combining seemingly-competing ideas in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* to create one coherent understanding of daimones in the universe.

It is also clear that while Syrianus' metaphysical interpretation of the *Timaeus* has a basis in Iamblichean interpretation, their interpretations vary on account of differences between the Iamblichean and Syrianic views of the universe. For, just as in his allegorical interpretation of the *Timaeus*, words can represent beings, Syrianus shows how animals or mythological figures in the *Timaeus* represent classes of beings. For instance, consider his discussion of *Tim.* 39e–40a: "and these forms are four – one of the heavenly kind of gods; another of the winged kind which traverses the air, thirdly, the class which inhabits the waters, and fourthly, the kind which goes on dry land." Syrianus says that the heavenly race of gods represent all the celestial classes, divine, angelic or daemonic. Moreover, he then connects the levels of gods with the four classes of beings, that is, a monad followed by a triad, each related to levels of gods.[39] This approach to the text is similar to the one seen in Syrianus' treatment of *Tim.* 40e ("of Ge and Uranus were born the children of Oceanus and Tethys"). Syrianus, following in the tradition of Iamblichus, identifies Ouranus and Gē with metaphysical forces. For Iamblichus, Ouranus represents the total demiurgic activity and thus something that limits the universe, while Gē represents aspects of permanency in the encosmic gods.[40] Proclus says that when Syrianus devises his own opinion, he follows "the purest conceptions of Iamblichus", but focuses specifically on the *sublunary* gods. (This is presumably in recognition of the context of the discussion in the *Timaeus* where – at least as Proclus and Syrianus understand it – the transition between celestial and sublunary gods occurs at 40e5.) Of course, these sublunary gods have proceeded

39 Proclus, *in Tim.* III 108.5–25 (=Syrianus, *in Tim.* fr. 19 Wear)

40 Syrianus, *in Tim.* fr.21 (=Syrianus, *in Tim.* III.173.17–18 Wear)

from the higher order intelligible and intellectual kings (174.20) – here, the triad of Kronos, Rhea, and Zeus.[41] The functions (and thus the natures) of Ouranus and Gē must therefore be consistent with those of their analogues at higher levels. Accordingly, Ouranos represents Limit (*peras*) and Gē the Unlimitedness (*apeiria*) in the cosmos responsible for multiplicity among individuals.[42] What is noteworthy, then, about Syrianus' interpretation is the use of Ouranus and Gē as two principles working together, an interpretation adopted from Iamblichus, but now identified with the two extreme forces in the universe located in the intellective and sublunary realm. In this way, Syrianus works within the earlier history of Platonist interpretation which he then modifies to fit the metaphysics of his universe, which relies heavily upon *peras* and *apeiria* as forces permeating all ranks of things.

V Conclusion

Based on a collection of testimonia on the *Phaedo, Parmenides, Philebus*, and *Timaeus*, one can gather quite a bit about Syrianus' hermeneutical practices. Namely, Syrianus' successors regard him as a particularly authoritative reader of Plato based on his adherence to the text. This adherence to the text coheres with Syrianus' doctrine that the text of Plato is not only divine, but filled with symbols which alert the reader to the metaphysical structure of the universe. Thus, when he does, in fact, stray from the text, Syrianus does so intentionally and self-consciously because he feels that the text requires insight (and discussion) into greater categories of Platonist metaphysics, as one part of Plato's theological teachings depends upon another. Thus, while Iamblichus also demands a metaphysical interpretation of Plato's dialogues, Syrianus' reading often differs from Iamblichus' in so far as their understanding of the structure of the universe differs. Syrianus' interpretation stresses the relationship between the One and the One-Being, as well as the proliferation of triads in his inter-locking hierarchical universe. Even though Syrianus inherits his hermeneutics from Iamblichus, whose reading of Plato shapes Syrianus' exegesis, the two differ in their method of reading. Perhaps this difference stems from the

41 Manolea treats Syrianus' metaphysical interpretations of Zeus and Rhea in his *in Met*. in (2009), 502–7.

42 Cf. *in Remp*. 87.29–89.9, where opposing forces of theomachy proceed from the original opposition between *peras* and *apeiria*. Syrianus says that Zeus and Hera correspond to *peras* and *apeiria* respectively; their union is the return of *apeiria* to *peras*. Sheppard (1980), 63.

fact that Syrianus seems aware of Iamblichus' more free-wheeling hermenutical style and structures his own exegesis accordingly as a kind of response.

VI Appendix: Syrianus on Plato: Testimonia of Syrianus

On the *Parmenides*: Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*: 640.20; 927.37; 928.10; 976.15; 1033.22; 1061.26; 1085.14; 1114.37; 1118.24; 1142.9; 1174.18; 1217.11; 1226.22; VII, 517, 25; Damascius *In Parmenidem*: 112.16; 149.26; 153.22

On the *Timaeus*: Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*: I.20.27; I.51.14; I.153.28; I.154.24; I. 218.14; I.241.3; I.310.3; I.315.3; I. 322.18; I.374.4; I.441.16; II.35.16; II.105.28; II.218.2; III.15.16; III.154.24; III.236.32; III.247.27; III.278.10

On the *Phaedo*: Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Phaedonem commentaria*: 9.2.8; 9.5.1; 10.3.19; 10.5.12; Damascius *In Phaedonem*: 172.2; 207.7; 242.4; 128.4; 132.4

On the *Philebus*: Damascius, *In Philebum*: 11.7; 17.4; 244.1; 253.2; 253.10

CHAPTER 26

Hermias: *On Plato's Phaedrus*

Harold Tarrant and *Dirk Baltzly*

I The Importance of the *in Phaedrum*

Several questions concerning this work have attracted scholarly dispute. Is it a commentary or only a set of notes? Is it from the voice of Syrianus or did the author listed in the manuscript, Hermias of Alexandria, subsequently add original material of his own? Evidence that would help to resolve these issues is in short supply, and for the purposes of this volume we can usually set them aside, and concentrate on the ways in which it illuminates the ancient reception of Plato. The *in Phaedrum* provides us with a unique perspective on such matters, and therein requires examination here regardless of intractable issues of authorship.

The *in Phaedrum* analyses the contents of the *Phaedrus*, and as such the commentator has to deal with an especially revealing text in the Platonic corpus. First, together with the *Symposium* (for which we have no surviving ancient commentary), it affords greater attention to setting and action than other Platonic dialogues. In particular, it paints a complex portrait of Socrates as a person, not merely as a formidable dialectician. Second, the work contains the central passage that the Neoplatonists appeal to as the textual basis for their insistence that each dialogue has a central theme or *skopos* that unifies the dialogue, determines its textual division, and differentiates its role in the process of understanding Plato's thought from other dialogues. Third, the work not only incorporates a myth that was incredibly influential for Neoplatonic thought (the image of the soul as winged chariot, accompanying the gods on a tour of the realm of Platonic Ideas), it also offers reasons for rejecting the naturalizing interpretation of myths (e.g. the myth of Boreas and Oreithuia), which inevitably have a bearing on Neoplatonist hermeneutics of myth. Finally, there is the critique of writing that has figured so significantly in the modern debate over Plato's unwritten doctrines.

In addition to having important subject matter, the *in Phaedrum* is complete. Unlike many of the extant Platonic commentaries, it goes from the beginning of the dialogue right through to its end. It must be acknowledged, however, that many topics, usually earlier in the *Phaedrus*, are tackled at greater length and that the usual length of comments reduces considerably as the work progresses. This tapering off is not uncommon within the tradition and occurs

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even in works that are not incomplete.[1] Hermias, however, divides the dialogue in such a way that one can better understand his priorities. This textual division and the account of the *skopos* from which it results is the first point of interest about the commentary.

II The *skopos* of the *Phaedrus* and Its Structure

Among the most contested questions about the *Phaedrus* is the extent of its thematic unity and what that unity might consist in.[2] It is not hard to see why. After the extended dramatic by-play that brings the characters to the bank of the Ilissus, we have three speeches on love followed by a discussion of rhetoric and writing. The question of unity is self-referentially suggested by Plato himself when he has Socrates criticise the speech of Lysias for its lack of unity. A good *logos*, he insists, must have the organic unity of a living thing. So what affords the *Phaedrus* itself that unity?

For Hermias, the answer is that every feature of the dialogue is unified by the theme of beauty, which can be manifested at different levels, potentially provoking corresponding levels of erotic response. As a result, the three speeches correspond to three kinds of *eros*: a dissolute *eros* exemplified by the speech of Lysias, a restrained *eros* in Socrates' first speech, and an inspired *eros* involving the palinode and final speech of Socrates (*in Phdr.* 13.6–10). These kinds of *eros* are correlated with the types of beauty that were highlighted by successive parts of the dialogue (12.18–13.5):

1. phenomenal beauty present in the outward form of Phaedrus;
2. beauty in speeches, of which Phaedrus was a lover;
3. an ascent to the beauty of souls seen in virtues and sciences;
4. the beauty of the encosmic gods in the palinode;
5. the intelligible beauty and the Beautiful Itself;
6. the descent to the beauty of souls, virtues and sciences;
7. the return to beauty in speeches.

1 Olympiodorus' *in Alc.* is similarly complete, and also tends to disappoint when it reaches the end of the dialogue – the very point where its *raison d'être*, the theory of the true self, is to be found. For possible external reasons for anti-climax in Olympiodorus' *Commentary*, see Tarrant (2007). Proclus' *in Tim.* also becomes much less concentrated over the last two Stephanus pages that it treats (at least in extant parts), and the Arabic fragment tackling high-profile material at the end of the dialogue is even more disappointing. See Arnzen (2013).

2 Cf. Werner (2007).

This division sees a kind of ascent and descent, bringing us back if not *to* the beginning at least *towards* the beginning. In the edition of Lucarini and Moreschini Hermias' treatment allots 73 pages to the 17 Stephanus pages to the beginning of Socrates' great palinode speech; 128 pages to the 13 Stephanus pages of the palinode, and just over 65 pages to the 23 remaining pages. Hence the theological apex of the dialogue in the palinode occupies nearly as much space as the two accounts of the lower reaches of beauty put together, and the less exalted topic of rhetoric and writing that follows the palinode has been treated sketchily when compared with the previous topic of Eros and the ascent to the gods. There is thus nothing too surprising in the uneven level of attention that Hermias affords to the later part of the text.

The rich details of setting in Plato's text are interpreted allegorically in terms of this theme of ascent and descent. Socrates descends to the level of Becoming and the love of sensible beauty in sharing the recitation of Lysias' speech, though he will soon seek to elevate Phaedrus to the beauty of things higher than words. So, for instance, when Socrates and Phaedrus find a convenient place to wade across the river and settle under the plane tree to share Lysias' speech, the fact that they only wet their *feet* indicates that they descend into the realm of Becoming only with the lowest of their psychic faculties (29.29–30.2).

The point at which modern commentators have been most puzzled about the unity of the dialogue occurs in the shift from the discussion of love to that of rhetoric at the end of Socrates' second speech. This shift is occasioned by Phaedrus' gossipy remark about those who have criticized Lysias for speech-writing.[3] Hermias fastens onto the mention of Phaedrus' "wonder" to explain that the change of topic is merely apparent:

> It is by virtue of wonder that philosophy is present in everyone, but particularly so through the density, continuity and unity of logos. After all, it is in this vein that he writes that every logos is brought to completion in the way in which a living being is one (264c). Just as that which is alive has distinct parts that are unified, it is likewise for the speech of Socrates. Thus since he wishes to introduce the discussion of rhetoric, the origin of the discussion is from this point, for Phaedrus is someone who stands

3 Phaedrus: "As to your speech, I found it wondrous from the moment you began. … In fact, my wondrous friend, a politician I know was only recently taking Lysias to task for [writing speeches]". (τὸν λόγον δέ σου πάλαι θαυμάσας ἔχω, … καὶ γάρ τις αὐτόν, ὦ θαυμάσιε, ἔναγχος τῶν πολιτικῶν τοῦτ' αὐτὸ λοιδορῶν ὠνείδιζε, καὶ διὰ πάσης τῆς λοιδορίας ἐκάλει λογογράφον.)

> in wonder at visible beauty and the construction of discourse, while the philosopher has come to the entire preceding discussion thanks to Phaedrus. So see how smoothly he introduces the discussion of rhetoric. (*in Phdr*. 219.8–18)

Thus Hermias' commentary provides an outstanding illustration of the interpretive principles of the Athenian school. The first step in understanding a Platonic dialogue is the identification of its *skopos*. This illuminates the textual division and the way in which the "limbs" of this "organically unified living being" are arranged. Viewed against the backdrop of this skopos, seemingly insignificant details of the dramatic setting can be read allegorically. Moreover, individual word choice on Plato's part can be seen to reveal the rationale for otherwise puzzling changes of direction.

III Intertextual Links

The use of comparative texts was particularly important in the school of Syrianus, and this would include other important works of Plato, and works of religious traditions that were somehow thought to be both authoritative and in fundamental agreement with Plato. Regarding the corroborating texts of religious traditions, there are the inevitable references to Homer and Hesiod, and Pythagoras too is treated as an authoritative if elusive figure.[4] This involves rather less use of the *Chaldaean Oracles* (115.9, 193.2–4) than in Proclus, but the same regular appeals to supposedly ancient Orphic texts. Of other Platonic dialogues, the following are mentioned by name: *Alcibiades 1*, *Cratylus*, *Gorgias*, *Laws*, *Parmenides*, *Phaedo*, *Philebus*, *Republic*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*,[5] *Symposium*, *Theaetetus* and *Timaeus*. Remarkably, once the *Phaedrus* itself is added, this coincides with the expanded fourteen-work curriculum employed by Proclus and presumably by Syrianus.[6]

4 The Homeric passages in Hermias are discussed by Manolea (2004).

5 At 247.28 there is a probable reference to this dialogue (274c), but the text reads Πολιτείᾳ rather than Πολιτικῷ. Given the different placement of the accent we doubt that this can be a recorder's error, unless the recorder had used abbreviations for such references.

6 There may be *allusions* to other works, and Lucarini and Moreschini cite passages from nine others in their *index locorum*, but it seems that either the audience is not taken to be familiar with them or they are not thought to offer the same insights into the core doctrines of Platonism.

In addition to the intertextual connections just mentioned, it is characteristic of the Athenian school to attempt to demonstrate the agreement of Plato and Aristotle. Where this is not thought to be possible, the superiority of Plato's views over that of Aristotle must be vindicated. The argument for the immortality of "all soul" (245c–246a) provides an illustration of this kind of intertextuality.[7] Socrates' arguments for the immortality of soul rely on the premise that soul is the self-moving first principle of all motion. This conflicts with Aristotle for two reasons. First, it seems that Aristotle rejects the idea that soul is self-moving (*DA* I.3). Second, with respect to the principle of all change, Aristotle argues that it is *unmoved*, not self-moving (*Phys.* VIII). Hermias does all he can to establish some measure of agreement between these esteemed Platonists.[8]

IV Socratic Expertise and Socratic Ignorance

As noted at the outset, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* are distinctive in the complexity of their depictions of Socrates and his expertise in matters pertaining to love. It is noteworthy that *in Phaedrum* includes only a very brief section on the characters of the dialogue (13.28–14.1), and that this does not interpret them as symbols for metaphysical levels or entities of the kind that one may find in Proclus and Damascius.[9] In Hermias' commentary Socrates is not a symbol, but

7 On this issue with respect to *Phdr.* in particular, see Menn (2012). The fact that Socrates says "*all* soul is immortal" means that this passage is inevitably enmeshed in disputes among the Neoplatonists about whether the irrational parts of the soul are also immortal. Cf. Proclus, *in Tim.* III 324.8, ff.

8 Both agree that the soul is free from all *corporeal* motions; Plato's *Laws* 869e–870a is cited as evidence of a distinction between the soul's own motions (wishing, reflecting, etc) and the corporeal motions for which psychic motions are a paradigmatic cause. Aristotle is held to agree with Plato when he eliminates the possibility that the soul might be subject to locomotion, alteration, diminution or growth (*DA* I 3, 406a12, ff). With respect to the first principle of all change, Hermias tells us that both philosophers agree that it is soul, initially treating the difference between "self-moved" and "unmoved" as simply terminological. He then argues that Aristotle's own philosophical principle of the continuity of nature means that he is committed to a self-moved mover intermediate between the unmoved mover and the other-moved bodies. Editors and translators struggle to identify any specific passage in Aristotle committing him to such a principle of mean terms, yet Alexander of Aphrodisias makes the nature through which the heavenly bodies are moved soul and does so on the basis of not dissimilar reasoning (see Alexander ap. Simplicium, *in de Caelo* 380.29–381.2 in Sorabji (2005), vol. 3, 49.

9 See Griffin (2014a).

a benevolent human being intent upon leading Phaedrus' soul upward. The status of the knowledge or wisdom through which Socrates serves as a guide seems just as complex for Hermias as it does to readers today. He is certainly conscious that there are three branches of knowledge to which Socrates lays claim (22.23–28), of which the erotic art (as described in the *Alcibiades* I, 273.6–13) is the Socratic expertise most relevant to the *Phaedrus* also (cf. 23.18–19, 26.15–16, 217.22–26), while the other two are maieutics and dialectic.

These three areas of expertise to which Socrates lays claim, all documented from dialogues within the curriculum, may easily seem to be in conflict with the various professions of ignorance that Plato's Socrates makes in the corpus. The *Apology*, perhaps, being outside the standard curriculum, might have worried Hermias less than it would worry us, but another profession of ignorance is to be found in the very passage which, according to Hermias, established Socrates as a master of midwifery (*Tht.* 150c–d; 22.25–26). Though we are not in a position to know how he would have handled it, there is one profession of ignorance within the *Phaedrus* that we can see him handling (229e5–6), and which had potential implications for any claim that Socrates might make to expertise. This is because Socrates there not only denies that he has self-knowledge of the type advocated by the Delphic description, but also suggests that this knowledge is absolutely fundamental and should precede all other types of investigation (229e6–230a1). That fundamental place of self-knowledge is further confirmed for the Neoplatonists by the fact that they routinely placed the *Alcibiades I*, treated as having self-knowledge as its central concern, at the beginning of the Platonic curriculum.[10] The result is that, to the extent that Socrates lacks self-knowledge, he has no business to be acquiring other areas of expertise.

Hermias asks two questions: (1) "Then did Socrates not know himself?" and (2) "Who else knew himself like Socrates did?" Clearly this assumes that Socrates was in fact something of an expert on self-knowledge, as he had shown in the *Alcibiades I*, and Hermias follows normal Neoplatonist practice of not relying for his answers upon questions of dramatic date, let alone upon date of composition. A two-part answer is given to the problem: first that Socrates did not know himself to the extent that god knew him and to the fullest extent that the Delphic inscription required, and second that he did not know himself as one whose soul had been entirely purified of the body – as soul-itself.[11]

10 One may compare the initial place given by Porphyry to the most relevant treatise for self-knowledge in Plotinus, *Enn.* I.1.

11 The term *autopsychê* (literally "soul-self") is presumably related to the notion from the *Alcibiades I* that the soul is each person's "self", but that even the self had a self (an *auto to*

The result of this passage (*in Phdr.* 33.12–18) is to suggest that Socrates was as good at apprehending his own self as any human being could be.

V The Nature and Purpose of Myth

The denial of self-knowledge had featured in the course of Socrates' explanation of his indifference to naturalizing explanations of Greek myths, in this case of the myth of Boreas and Oreithuia that was introduced by Phaedrus at 229b. Socrates was asked whether he believed it, and, while he did not affirm his belief, he preferred to resist such fashionable explanations, because there is no end to the number of stories that one would be having to explain in this way. Since the Neoplatonists had long treated myths allegorically, they were not in a position to take this to be a statement of Socrates' preference for avoiding all complex interpretation of them, as certain interpreters referred to at 32.15–16 had done. Hermias sees Socrates being more targeted here, and rejecting explanation in terms of alleged historical events, things that we think likely enough, and material causality. Rather their meaning has to be found in the truths that they conceal and especially in supernatural matters (32.15–20). So it is not a matter of his rejecting non-literal interpretation, but of his rejection of interpretation in terms of lower reality rather than higher, and he finds in the phrase "according to probability" (*kata to eikos*) a reference to interpretation that operates according to the crude criteria of the phenomenal world rather than those of the intellect (33.7–10). Ironically, Socrates' reference to Typhon (230a3–6) points to the way that mythical ideas can be used to illuminate not the physical world but the inner life of the soul – the very self-knowledge that he desires. Hermias is well aware of this (33.29–34.7). Somewhat later (78.15–25), in relation to mistakes requiring a palinode, "mythology" is said to be a kind of theology, and therefore to involve serious errors. This reinforces the link between myths and things that need to be understood on a higher level.

The *Phaedrus*, perhaps partly because of its literary pretensions, is a rich source of material that may be viewed as mythical. Besides the palinode, the majority of which is today normally treated among Plato's myths, there are such smaller items as the myths of the Cicadas (259a–d) and of Theuth (274c–275b). Hermias finds no difficulty in treating either of these as myth (Cicadas

auto, 129b1, 130d4), an "inner self" that the Neoplatonists assumed to be more important still. Proclus identified this with the intellective self at *in Remp*. I 172.2–6.

at *in Phdr.* 223.4–5, 225.17–226.4; Theuth at 7.18, 267.8–16, 268.29–30), and on seeing them as involving the truths of a higher order than might appear. However, Hermias feels the need to explain why Socrates foreshadows that his nymph-inspired speech will be a myth (237a9, *in Phdr.* 53.8–11); more importantly he feels the same need to treat the term "myth" in the palinode at 253c7 (*in Phdr.* 202.1–10), when nothing in the palinode had previously been described as "myth". Hermias explains it as introducing the discussion of the human soul in relation to its body, within the world of phenomena that resembles a myth; for when it was in its higher condition, previously discussed, there was nothing of this quality about it. Hence Hermias thinks of the language of the palinode as poetic rather than myth-like, especially before the point where the chariot-team of the embodied soul is introduced. Socrates also refers back to the palinode calling it a "mythical hymn" (*mythikon tina hymnon*) at 265c1, and in this case Hermias (*in Phdr.* 244.27–245.2) refers back specifically to that part of the palinode that introduces wings *for the charioteer and horses*, "capturing the erotic experience through a kind of myth and fictive image" (*dia mythou tinos kai plasmatos*). Clearly he is again thinking of the imaginative way that Plato had described the embodied soul's condition from 253c to 256e, deducing from the fact that the embodied horses and charioteer could struggle in different directions, up or down, that each had wings of its own.

Regardless of the precise details, it is the imagery of the palinode that Hermias thinks of as myth-like, not the basic account. The school of Syrianus treated with absolute seriousness much that the palinode refers to, including a world above the heavens where the intelligibles are to be viewed, a group of encosmic gods that can rise to the very pinnacle of the heavens, the notion that both gods and human souls can have some kind of chariot or vehicle attached to them, and the nature of the cosmic cycles to which human souls are subjected. All this is treated with equal seriousness in the fifth book of Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*. Furthermore, the journeys described in the palinode are never treated as just another account of the journeys of the disembodied soul, similar to those found in the Myth of Er in the *Republic* or in the closing myths of the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedo*. All these were called *nekuiai* (stories of the world of the dead) and treated as a type of myth;[12] the palinode fell rather into the category of inspired diction (*enthusiasmos*), arising from the presence of a god who takes over, and leads the speaker where that god wants (see *in Phdr.* 245.2–3). That means that it could be treated in a manner that we today

12 See Tarrant (2014), 152, for references to Proclus, Damascius, Olympiodorus and his school.

would consider remarkably literal, and that correctly understood it has to be a vehicle for the truth. Whereas today the truth of passages that are not argued dialectically is sometimes treated as something to which Plato was less committed, the very fact that after *Phaedrus* 246a3 Plato was communicating in a revelatory rather than dialectical fashion meant that it carried a guarantee that went beyond that of dialectic and could not be dialectically challenged.

VI Written and Unwritten Plato

In modern times the *Phaedrus* has been the most important text for those who believe that Plato's serious views were not to be revealed in his writings, and are best recovered from reports in surviving works of Aristotle, Aristoxenus, and the Aristotelian commentators, with some attention to Xenocrates. Such views appear in a variety of ways in the writings of Hans-Joachim Krämer, Konrad Gaiser, and Thomas Szlezák, all associated with the Tübingen school. Esoteric passages in the *Epistles* tend to be used to support and further explain the position on writing taken at the end of the *Phaedrus*, but the *Phaedrus* is the most fertile ground for debate since everybody is agreed on its authenticity, and it contains none of the esotericism of the *Epistles*. The critique of writing is encountered between 275c and 278b, and it regards written contributions as being less serious and less flexible than the lessons delivered directly to the student. Writings can function as a reminder, especially for oneself as one gets older, but books have the disadvantage that they just carry on saying the same thing, never answering any additional questions. The passage raises some obvious questions, among them does the critique of writings (*sungrammata*) apply also to Platonic dialogues, and in particular does it apply to the *Phaedrus*, thereby seeming to undermine the very things that it is claiming. Are these claims too non-serious?

Hermias' commentary gives one the impression that such questions were by no means new. At a point where Hermias is detailing some early criticisms of the *Phaedrus* he surprisingly employs the word for written composition (*sungramma*) that Plato uses in his critiques of writing, not only in the *Phaedrus* (277d7, 278c4; cf. 257d–258d) but also in *Epistle* VII (341c5, 344c4). Since the author himself otherwise refers to the *Phaedrus* as a "dialogue" (*dialogos*) in the first one hundred pages of the work, and does not usually think of Platonic dialogues as *sungrammata*, there is a high probability that the word has been chosen by the critics – thus suggesting that the very dialogue seeking to devalue writing is not exempt itself. We get confirmation from the anonymous *Prolegomena* (13.6–14) that critics accused Plato of slandering (*diaballei*) the

writers of *syngrammata* because they are lifeless and unable to give answer further questions because they just go on saying the same thing. Hence, Plato claimed, one should not write these works, but leave behind pupils as "living writings" – just as Socrates and Pythagoras had preferred to do.[13] And yet he still left behind his writings.

So what signs does Hermias show of having an answer for these problems? He does not deny that Plato has allowed for some such prose writings to qualify as philosophic (278c–d; *in Phdr.* 277.28–278.1), and he had earlier (223.5–9 on 258e) affirmed that Plato's remarks were not supposed to be confined to rhetoric, so he is not trying to exempt Plato. And though he does not state the actual criticism he seems to be replying to it at 271.10–18:

> And one must realize that Plato is not rejecting writing, for many of the most famous ancients wrote (*synegrapsan*), like Orpheus and Hermes;[14] whereas Pythagoras and Socrates did not write. Hence Socrates teaches certain restrictions on writing at this point, to have knowledge of the facts, and, when one realizes the truth but uses it as a reminder for the forgetfulness of old age and as a help for the pupils, and does not take it seriously but using it for recreation, then to write is a fine and attractive manner; whereas he says that those without knowledge, who approach it as something great and worthy of serious attention, with their reputation in view, write in an inappropriate manner.

It is as if Hermias is saying that writing is an excellent thing as long as one approaches it with all the caveats that Plato requires, and he certainly does not give excessive emphasis to the fact that it is Socrates who speaks within the dialogue, not Plato himself. After all, the Neoplatonist commentators are regarding this set of writings as an inspired source that is to be mined for every ounce of understanding that is possible. They go on writing about Platonic writings, but with the intention of making sure that those writings do indeed mature within a tradition that also functions orally, and asking and responding in detail to questions. Hence it is not surprising, perhaps, that Hermias also lays a great deal of emphasis upon the success that living-writing had had in

13 The example of Socrates and Pythagoras is also found in Hermias (*in Phdr.* 271.12, cf. 220.21).

14 Orpheus is of course a major theological writer for the school of Syrianus, while for Hermias Hermes is the discoverer of writing underlying the myth of Theuth (8.10–12, 266.26–28, 267.20–21 etc.). Given his name and his Alexandrian origins it is not surprising that he also discusses Hermes Trismegistos at 99.6–8.

the fourth-century pupil of the living-writer: Socrates' success in Plato, Plato's in Xenocrates and Xenocrates' in Polemo according to the succession (*in Phdr.* 272.5–7; cf. 273.13–14). Plato was part of a direct tradition, which starts with Socrates (whose importance in this commentary has been noted above) and continues to Polemo with two interesting omissions – Speusippus the unpopular successor who had rejected the Ideas, and Aristotle who had understood the writings too literally. Plato both wrote, and founded a living tradition that would provide a context in which the writings could flourish.

In fact the "unwritten doctrines" or "unwritten classes" of Plato are not something which the school of Syrianus seem to discuss, even though Philoponus and Simplicius later do so. Proclus makes three references to unwritten classes, one each involving the unwritten teaching of Parmenides (*in Parm.* 1033.16), Plotinus (*in Tim.* II 213.10) and Syrianus (*PT* I 42.13), and none to those of Plato. The reason is not hard to understand, for with the writings treated as a repository of the genuine truth, often cryptically presented, and taken to be reminders of the substance of the classes, there was simply no room for any divide between the written and the oral, except when the written was misunderstood.

VII Conclusion

Hermias' commentary is a rich source for those interested in the reception of Plato in antiquity and the only surviving example of a Neoplatonic *Phaedrus* commentary.[15] Moreover, Hermias' commentary was important in preserving that central role for the *Phaedrus* in the subsequent history of Platonism. Ficino drafted a Latin translation or paraphrase of Hermias and it, together with the relevant parts of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, coloured his interpretation of the dialogue.[16]

Contemporary students of Plato's thought may find the *in Phaedrum* an odd work. On many issues that concern us today Hermias is all but silent, but that silence is itself a matter of considerable interest. In other matters that do not concern us today he is deeply involved. Part of the reason for this is that a common modern assumption, that Plato is at his most scientific (and therefore most interesting) when he is at his most dialectical, is virtually reversed in Hermias so that Plato is his most inspired (and therefore most instructive)

15 This in itself is important; *Phdr.* had been central to the Platonic tradition since Iamblichus, and widely read before that, as the papyrus record shows.

16 Allen (1980).

when he breaks into long passages of unsupported poetic description. What we feel needs to be treated as myth, with little more than some implications of value, can be taken in a surprisingly literal fashion by Hermias. Socrates becomes important in a way that had not appeared to be the case in Plotinus and Porphyry, but that Socrates, in spite of a rather lively portrait that Hermias offers of him, is himself not easy to distinguish doctrinally from Plato his pupil and successor. It is to be hoped that with the new edition of Lucarini and Moreschini (2012), a new English translation by Baltzly and Share (2017), and a promised collection of essays edited by Wear, Finamore and Manolea, the significance of Hermias' commentary will become more apparent.

CHAPTER 27

Proclus and the Authority of Plato

Jan Opsomer

I Diadochos and Teacher

Discussing Proclus' reception of Plato nearly amounts to speaking about all of Proclus. Plato is everywhere in Proclus' biography, works and thought. Proclus wrote commentaries on Plato's dialogues and systematic works on the philosophy of Plato and is indeed the main ancient commentator on Plato. Moreover, even when he discussed other thinkers he saw them through a Platonic lens. After all Proclus was Plato's official successor – *diadochos* –, believed by his circles to be chosen by the gods as head of the Athenian Academy, after having studied under two earlier successors of Plato, Plutarch of Athens and Syrianus.

Proclus was an extremely prolific writer. Only a part of his works has come down to us, but these contain a wealth of information and convey a pretty good idea of Platonism in the fifth century CE. About the thought of no other Platonist of that time are we better informed. Proclus is known for being the great systematiser of late antiquity, but that reputation may be due in part to the fact that so much of the works of his predecessors and contemporaries has been lost. Surely, Proclus was extremely methodical and presents a highly complex and scholastic system in which the minutest of details are accounted for. Only we cannot be sure how much of this was of his own doing and how much he owed to his predecessors.[1] The doctrinal innovations listed by his biographer Marinus (*Vit.Procl.* 23) are minor and in his extant work we never catch him disagreeing on any substantial point with his master Syrianus. The fact that he wrote so many works, however, and the content of the works that we have should make us suspicious regarding this piece of information offered by Marinus. Presumably Proclus indeed adopted the outline of the system, its structure and many of the supporting arguments from Syrianus, but he devoted thousands of pages to painstaking analysis of texts written by Plato and others in order to find further evidence for the Platonic doctrine and to bring every section of each text deemed authoritative in line with the great system of

1 For good introductions to the thought of Proclus, see Helmig and Steel (2011); Chlup (2012); d'Hoine and Martijn (2017).

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thought. By doing so, he inevitably added to the Platonic philosophical system, refining and expanding it. The results of this can be seen in the commentaries, but also in a great work of synthesis, the *Platonic Theology*.

One should of course add that innovation was never a goal in the Platonic tradition, and certainly not an idea that any Platonist would openly endorse. The Platonic tradition was inherently conservative. The aim was faithfulness to Plato, that is, to preserve and, where necessary, restore the master's thought with the help from previous enlightened interpreters. Marinus' biography of Proclus conveys the impression of an inspired commentator working in the tradition of his teachers: his first works, among which were a commentary on the *Phaedo* and the commentary on the *Timaeus*, were firmly based on the teaching of Plutarch of Athens and Syrianus. In particular the former may have been essentially college notes "from the mouth (*apo phônês*) of the teacher", that is, of Plutarch.

II Proclus' Works

The *Corpus Proclianum* consists of commentaries and systematic works. Six commentaries have survived, one on the first book of Euclid's *Elements* and five on Plato: commentaries on the *Alcibiades I* (considered as a genuine work of Plato by the ancients; nowadays its authenticity is contested), on the *Cratylus,* on the *Republic,* on the *Timaeus,* and on the *Parmenides*. Of the extant systematic works two borrow their way of presenting and demonstrating content from Euclid: the *Elements of Physics* and the *Elements of Theology*. The latter is probably his most well-known and most influential systematic work. Equally monumental is however his *Platonic Theology*. It is less concerned with ontology and the structuring principles of the system and more with the theological hierarchy. Other works deal with astronomy (the *Exposition of Astronomical Hypotheses*) and with problems of providence, fate, evil, and moral responsibility (the *Tria opuscula*). Finally we possess some hymns to the gods.

This is just a fraction, but a substantial fraction, of the many works of which Proclus was the author. We indeed possess fragments and traces of many other writings.[2] Here I will just pick out some that are of special relevance for Proclus' reception of Plato: Proclus wrote a polemical work *On the Eternity of the World*, a treatise on the *Philosophy of the Chaldaeans*, an *Examination of Aristotle's Objections against the Timaeus,* a work on *Plato's Proofs of the Immortality of the*

2 For a complete survey of the works that are mentioned or quoted elsewhere, see Luna and Segonds (2012), complemented by Endress (2012) on the Arabic tradition.

Soul, a work on *Socrates' Palinody*, which may have been a part of his commentary on the *Phaedrus*. He moreover produced several other commentaries on Plato, besides the ones that have survived. We have traces of commentaries on the *Gorgias,* the *Phaedo*, the *Theaetetus,* the *Sophist*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Symposium* (on the speech of Diotima), on the *Philebus*: There was also a separate work *On the Three Monads* (in the *Philebus*). Here also an influential *Prolegomena to the Philosophy of Plato* should be mentioned– it was the source for the anonymous *Prolegomena* written in the school of Olympiodorus. The title *Exposition* (*Hypotyposis*) *of the Philosophy of Plato* possibly refers to the *Prolegomena*, but it could also be a separate work. Finally, he was the author of a *Collection of Mathematical Theorems related to the Timaeus*, of a work called *Purification of the Doctrines of Plato*, and of a commentary on Plotinus' *Enneads*.

The dialogues for which Proclus wrote commentaries correspond to those included in the school-curriculum that had become canonical since Iamblichus.[3] In the Platonic, higher part of the curriculum – "the greater mysteries" – classes probably started with Plato's biography and a general introduction to his work and thought. In this context the teacher will also have discussed the question of authenticity for contested dialogues.[4] We may get an idea of the content of such an introductory course from the anonymous *Prolegomena to the Philosophy of Plato*. The Platonic curriculum consisted of the following dialogues, listed in the order of study: *Alcibiades 1, Gorgias, Phaedo, Cratylus, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Phaedrus, Symposium,* and *Philebus*. This program led up to the study of the two "perfect" dialogues, *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*.[5] Proclus has written commentaries on all these dialogues (only for the *Statesman* do we not have traces of a commentary). The *Republic* was not part of the curriculum.

None of the five surviving commentaries of Plato are complete. The commentary on the *Timaeus* runs up to 44c–d, not even halfway through the dialogue, that on the *Parmenides* likewise covers less than half of the dialogue, up to 142a (the last part surviving only in a Latin translation by William of Moerbeke). The summary of the commentary on the *Cratylus* again comprehends less than half of the dialogue, up to 407e, and the same is true for the commentary on the *First Alcibiades*, which breaks off in the middle of a discussion on 116a–b. In the case of the *Timaeus* commentary there is evidence that it originally covered the whole dialogue, and it is plausible that this was also the case for the others. The truncated state they are in is therefore most probably due to the accidents of transmission.

3 See Finamore in this volume.

4 Mansfeld (1994), 30.

5 Festugière (1969).

The commentaries on the *Alcibiades 1*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Parmenides* consist of an introduction followed by a running commentary: the literal quotation of a portion of the text (the *lemma*) is followed by its interpretation. More so than the other commentaries, the commentary on the *Timaeus*[6] contains a wealth of information on the earlier exegetic tradition. Because of this, it has often been used as a source for the study of the history of Platonism. The commentary on the *Cratylus* has only been preserved in excerpts. It too contained an introduction, but the *lemmata* have been lost – only summaries of interpretations remain (the excerpter cites Proclus in the third person). The commentary on the *Republic* has a different format from the other extant commentaries: it is on the whole not lemmatic, but consists of seventeen essays, the first of which serves as an introduction. Merely the sixteenth, very long essay (264 pages in the Teubner edition), dealing with the myth of Er, is organised by *lemmata*. The commentary on the *Republic* consists of heterogeneous parts and may very well be a conglomerate of texts written at different times, for different purposes, and addressed at audiences with different levels of proficiency.[7] None of the extant commentaries have been preserved in their entirety.

III Plato the Theologian

Proclus regards Plato first and foremost as a theologian, that is a practitioner of the highest science, that of the gods, which includes what is nowadays called metaphysics[8] and ontology. Plato is not merely *a* theologian, he is the best and most perfect of his breed. This is explicitly stated in the programmatic introduction to the *Platonic Theology*, and is confirmed in many other works.

Plato's credibility as a theologian is seen to depend above all on the fact that he was the recipient of a special revelation, this because he possessed a truly exceptional aptitude, already present from birth but honed by intensive and dedicated study, to receive theological knowledge and insight. His understanding of the divine realities combined with his skills of exposition make him, literally, the perfect teacher (*PT* I.1). The means by which Plato teaches us are his works, most importantly his dialogues, but also some of the letters. Contrary to the attitude towards Plato prevalent today, Proclus considers Plato's works not as displaying philosophical inquiry in action, but rather as presenting accomplished teachings. In other words, they are held to contain not efforts, but

6 For its structure and content, see Lernould (2001) and Martijn (2008).

7 Sheppard (1980); Sheppard (2014), 60.

8 Cf. Steel (2005).

results. Plato is supposed to be the "one man" who has received the highest initiation (*epopteia*) and achieved the understanding of the divine mysteries and therefore can be our "guide and hierophant" (the mystical expounder and priest of the initiation, literally "the speaker of divine things"), our "mystagogue" (*PT* I.1, 5.16–6.16). Because of this purported revelation the figure of Plato is clad with the highest epistemic authority in the domain of theology. Moreover, Proclus is convinced that the teaching of Plato is in perfect harmony with that of other theological sources of authority, such as the Chaldaean (the Oracles) and Orphic traditions, and the theurgic rites.[9] They are all used in order to corroborate his interpretation of Plato and in the commentaries, especially those on the *Timaeus* and the *Cratylus,* it is standard procedure to show the harmony of the different theological traditions by means of sophisticated exegesis.

Plato may be invested with the highest authority in matters of theology, Proclus is fully aware that he is not easy to understand.[10] Yet understanding him is for us the way to knowledge and happiness. It is therefore the goal of the ancient Platonists to study his writings and explain them to others. Therefore the very concept of philosophy is for them exegetical at its core.

One reason why Plato's form of communication is difficult to understand lies in his alleged use of riddles (*ainigmata*),[11] that is, in his proclivity to speak in a riddling way (*ainittomai*) in order to convey lofty truths that cannot be understood by all. The presence of riddles, especially in the myths, commands an allegorical reading.[12] Contrary to the great mythologues, however, Plato very often chooses not to express himself in riddles, but instead opts for a transparent and clear form of teaching,[13] so that even if we do not understand all obscurities we have no excuse not to try to get a firm grip on his dialogues. Plato, moreover, had good reasons for his use of riddles, so Proclus thinks. This is connected with the main reason for the difficulties of understanding the dialogues: Plato's primary subject matter. The extreme difficulty of theology is according to the Platonists connected with our mode of existence, far removed from the transcendent simplicity of the gods. Even so, humans can in principle have

9 Cf. Sheppard (2014), 62 and 73–74.

10 See also Anon. *Proleg.* 2.42–49: people understand Plato in different ways, but in some sense he is accessible to all.

11 E.g. *PT* 1.1, 10.1; *in Remp.* 1.118.18.

12 Sheppard (1980), 145; Sheppard (2014), 58.

13 *in Tim.* I 129.15–19: "Plato's communicative method is not of the same riddling sort as Pherecydes', but gives clear teaching on very many points of doctrine, so one should not be forced into explaining it away when the man is proposing to teach us directly." (trans.) Tarrant

access to divine realities because the highest power in the soul, the "one" of the soul, also called the *hyparxis* of soul, is akin to the gods (*PT* I.3, 15.15–21). This notwithstanding, the right kind of training is indispensable if we are to get a glimpse of divine truths: this includes a life of virtue, the study of logic, especially the methods of analysis and dihaeresis, and knowledge of nature. These three prepare us for the study of Plato's dialectic (*PT* I.2, 10.11–11.10).

Because of the nature of its subject, theological teaching cannot possibly consist in the straightforward, direct statement of matters of fact. The person who, like Plato, has gained insight in the highest of theological matters, must resort to our ordinary means of discursive communication in order to convey something of this insight. Plato was believed to have done so using precise and sophisticated methods, as we will see. This also means that equally precise and sophisticated methods of interpretation are needed to attain some of the same insights, lying hidden in the text. These methods allow us to decode the hidden message, but that is not all there is to it. For the required decoding does not have the character of a mere mechanical operation, but has to be accompanied by the attainment of the right state of soul and mind. The pupil has to reach the spiritual maturity that enables him or her – the Athenian school had male and female members[14] – to acquire a deeper understanding of the text, which would enable them to make sense of details that would have escaped them otherwise. Proclus specifies that any explanation has to adapt itself to the person to whom it is addressed, at the level at which that particular soul is capable of operating.[15]

For the study of Plato, direct contact with the text through close reading – very close reading – is indispensable, but the study of earlier interpretations too plays a crucial role. Fortunately, indeed, the student of the dialogues can rely on an existing philosophical tradition. After a long interval, during which the truth had been eclipsed, so Proclus says, its light shone forth again with the arrival of what we nowadays often call "Neoplatonism", which for the ancients was of course just "Platonism" (but of course there is nothing wrong with the fact that our descriptive historical categories do not coincide with those used by the historical actors, just like we also feel justified to use our own conceptual tools). These earlier interpreters, Proclus claims, had received a nature akin to that of Plato himself and were thereby able to attain the same truths, that is, to restore the truths contained in Plato's texts. Proclus specifically names Plotinus, his disciples Amelius and Porphyry, Iamblichus and Theodorus. It is

14 See Addey in this volume.

15 Cf. *PT* I.4, 17.9–18.

from them that Proclus' own teacher, Syrianus, received "the truest and purest light of truth", which he then communicated to Proclus. Syrianus, says Proclus, imparted to him the complete philosophy of Plato, and made him share in the secret traditions into which Syrianus himself had been initiated by his own teachers (*PT* 1.1, 6.16–7.8). Scholars often quote this short and allusive sketch of the history of Platonism. It suggests that some truths could not be divulged, but were nonetheless communicated orally to Syrianus and then passed on to Proclus. What these alleged truths were we will never know. Proclus merely speaks of a "mystic truth about things divine". Did these truths concern the highest principle?

Against this hypothesis speaks the fact that the highest principle was considered ineffable, hence nothing could be stated about it. Paradoxically, this did not stop Proclus from writing about it rather extensively: the final part of the seventh book of the commentary on the *Parmenides* is devoted to it, but concludes with an appeal to silence. Another possibility is that these secret insights had to do with other divinities or theurgic rites associated with them. We can make an educated guess about the question why these insights had to remain secret: they could not be divulged because only those very few persons with the suitable nature and the appropriate preparation could understand them. Hence for fear of misunderstanding and ridicule they had to remain hidden from the masses. Another relevant aspect is certainly that the insights in question transcend discursive understanding and can therefore not be captured by means of a direct and straightforward description. No doubt, Proclus and his peers were honest about their beliefs. More sceptically inclined readers can see this nonetheless as a clever ploy to shelter that part of their beliefs that could not possibly be rationally justified, or defended, because they are meaningless and misguided. However, such readers were probably not the kind of people that Proclus would need to worry about.

An actual cause for worry, however, would have been the Christians, about whom Proclus remains remarkably silent, except for some coded allusions. The Christians were in power and the fate of the Hellenic Platonic tradition depended upon their good-will. Hellenic Platonism was at best tolerated, yet the period of relative toleration would soon come to an end. This may very well be the perspective from which Proclus' remarks about his own place in the tradition should be understood. Proclus indeed sees it as his task to communicate what he has received from his predecessors to "those who will live later", in the form of "*hypomnemata* of the blessed sights" that he was allowed to enjoy, to admire and to strive for under the guidance of his master (*PT* 1.1, 7.11–17). The word *hypomnema,* which is also the term to denote exegetical commentaries, primarily evokes the notion of a memory aid. Proclus suggests that his writings

are reminiscences of visions that he experienced and can help those who are capable of similar visions to attain them or to recall them once they have experienced them. It is a plausible hypothesis that Proclus saw it as his duty to record for posterity a tradition that was under threat and that this amounted to producing a great synthesis of the tradition of wisdom bequeathed to him. This may have involved putting into writing teachings that until then had only been transmitted orally.

Be that as it may, it is clear that according to Proclus aspiring Platonists not only need a thorough acquaintance with the source texts, which can only be obtained through years of intense study, but should also make use of those earlier interpreters that were sanctioned by the later tradition. Moreover, they should profit from the guidance of expert teachers, if available. When Proclus extolls the merits of certain interpreters over others (those he passes over in silence in the *Platonic Theology*, and whom he criticises elsewhere) this is not merely a matter of paying tribute to those who deserve it, but also a way of bolstering a particular, theological view about Plato, the capstone of which is a specific theory of the ineffable first principle, the One-Good. The concept of authority – not only that of Plato, but also that of later commentators, is thus a central concern for the Platonic exegetical tradition. Ultimately their epistemic authority is warranted by the gods: truth originally resides in them and is transmitted to Plato and later to Plotinus and his successors, until it arrived at Proclus. These people attain the divine truth only thanks to the alleged fact that they were personally illuminated by the gods (*PT* 1.1, 5.16–7.8).

While theological information can be found in every single work of Plato, Proclus claims, some texts are more important in this respect than others. In *PT* 1.5, he distinguishes three groups: The first comprises the dialogues *Phaedo, Phaedrus, Symposium, Philebus, Sophist, Statesman, Cratylus*, and *Timaeus.* The second group consists of myths: those of the *Gorgias*, the *Protagoras*, the tenth book of the *Laws* (on divine providence), the tenth book of the *Republic* (on the Moirai, their mother and the revolution of the universe). Finally there are the *Letters*, especially the second Letter with its passage on the "three kings" (1.5, 24.12–25.2). These texts deal with specific sections of the divine world (which do not necessarily coincide with the *skopoi* of the different dialogues): the *Philebus* with the One-Good, the first dyad and the first triad; the *Timaeus* with the intelligible, the demiurge and the inner-worldly gods; the *Phaedrus* with the intelligible-intellective (the Forms); the *Statesman* with the hypercosmic gods; the *Sophist* with the inner-worldly gods; the *Symposium*, *Cratylus* and the *Phaedo* with particular gods at various levels (1.5, 25.3–23). The aforementioned texts, while containing detailed information about particular classes of the

gods, are far surpassed by the *Parmenides*, which is held to contain a systematic and complete, dialectical account of the entire divine hierarchy (*PT* I.8–12).

IV Exegesis and the Modes of Teaching

The mediation provided by Platonists who authored systematic treatises or commentaries was necessitated by obscurities, missing information and apparent inconsistencies in the original texts. Since Plato was held to be perfect, there was a strong assumption that Plato had good reasons for writing as he did, veiling certain truths, making assertions that could be understood in different ways or not talking about certain things. As far as divine realities are concerned, the alleged reasons have been adumbrated above. Regarding the study of nature, Proclus claims that Plato did not bother with investigating insignificant problems in biology and metereology with which Aristotle bores his readers.[16] Because Plato was held to follow a precise authorial strategy further reflection on this strategy is requisite if we want to read his works correctly and understand his thought.

Key to Proclus' exegetical approach is the theory of the modes of theological teaching (*tropoi tês theologikês didaskalias*), whose use he attributes to Plato. Generally, there are four possible modes for speaking about the gods:[17]

1. Symbolic or mythical (*symbolikôs, mythikôs*)
2. Iconic, that is, through images (*eikonikôs, apo tôn eikonôn*)
3. Inspired (*entheastikôs*)
4. Dialectical or epistemic (*dialektikôs, kat'epistêmên*)

The four modes, sometimes misunderstood as means of discovery and inquiry, are actually modes of *presentation*, that is, modes of teaching. Only insofar as the process of learning from a teacher reflects the earlier process of discovery, may they indirectly tell us something about how certain truths about the gods may originally have been discovered by Plato or others. That is, however, something about which Proclus does not speculate any further. He does, however, explain how the modes are used for teaching purposes and how, accordingly, we should read the dialogues. The first two modes are grouped as pertaining

16 *in Tim.* I 7.6–13. Simplicius, *in Phys.* 3.13–4.7 can be seen as a reply to Proclus' criticism of Aristotle at *in Tim.* I 6.21–7.16. Aristotle, however, can fend for himself: see *Analytica Posteriora* I.5, 644b15–645a16.

17 *PT* I.4; *in Parm.* I 646.16–647.18 Steel. Cf. Pépin (2000); Gersh (2000); Sheppard (2000).

to a veiled or allusive way of speaking (*di'endeixeôs*), the last two are forms of straightforward teaching without leaving anything in the dark (*aparakaluptôs*). Various theologians and theological traditions have made use of different modes: the symbolic mode was used by the Orphics and by Homer,[18] the iconic mode was developed by the Pythagoreans, the inspired mode is typical of the Chaldaean Oracles and in general those who are initiated in the highest mysteries. Plato inaugurated the use of dialectic, that is the scientific mode, and brought it to perfection, and he was also the one who managed to combine all four modes of teaching. Plato varied his methods according to context, often combining several modes to achieve his goals.

Proclus does not really define the four modes, but shows what he means through examples (*PT* I.4):

1. The symbolic manner of revealing divine realities can be witnessed in the myth of the *Gorgias*, where the mention of the judges in the underworld hints at a demiurgic triad of gods. Another example is provided by the *Protagoras* on the gifts mortal living beings receive from the gods. These symbols hide the divine truths from those who do not deserve to know them, while revealing them to those capable of understanding the veiled references. Whenever myths are told, symbols are used to express something about the divine. Proclus portrays the symbolic manner as archaic. Yet, whereas older poets were fond of "tragic" imagery that stays close to matter and the body – amputations, lacerations, wars, feuds, adultery and the like – Plato avoids these aspects because of the danger of a literal interpretation which would give people wrong ideas about the gods, as Socrates explains in the *Republic.* Instead he aims at revealing the beauty and goodness of the divine and points the way to interpretations that bring out the noble (for instance at *Phaedr.* 249b4–e4).
2. In the iconic mode, displayed frequently in the *Timaeus* – a dialogue in which Plato consciously adopts the Pythagorean style – and the *Politicus* and in many other dialogues, truths about the gods are shown through images: the statesman represents the celestial demiurgy, the geometric shapes of the elements represent the attributes of gods that rule over different parts of the universe, the divisions of the soul mirror the classes of the gods. The iconic mode is said to be related to mathematics, exemplified by Pythagorean accounts of numbers and

18 Cf. Lamberton (1986).

shapes that represent divine attributes, and is based on the principle of analogy: the relation between aspects of images down here is the same as the relation between their divine causes.[19]

3. The divine madness in the *Phaedrus* exemplifies the inspired manner of teaching. The divinely inspired teacher communicates in a direct manner the knowledge transmitted to him by the gods themselves.
4. Texts that are eminently dialectical are the *Sophist* and the second part of the *Parmenides*. In the latter dialogue, as Syrianus and Proclus understand it, Plato expounds the entire structure of reality, presenting the hierarchy of the divine realities in the sequence of negated attributes in the first hypothesis, and of the asserted attributes in the second. The first hypothesis deals with the One, which Proclus equates with the supreme god, who transcends all attributes. The sequence of negated attributes corresponds to the hierarchy of the other divine realities, who are positively characterised by these same attributes. The order of the positive attributes in the second hypothesis maps almost perfectly onto that of the negations in the first (the small differences receive, of course, a sophisticated exegetical explanation).[20] The use of an abstract, technical vocabulary, the systematic approach and the use of demonstrations are proper to the dialectical mode. The dialectical mode is accordingly characterised by precision, detail, and completeness. In the *Sophist*, for instance, Plato is held to explain exactly what Being-itself is and why it depends on the One; in the *Parmenides* Plato sets out all the classes of the gods, in the right order, and the attributes that define them.

It is evident that the assumption of Plato's use of these modes legitimates interpretations that deviate from the literal message of the texts. Whenever Proclus sees a reference to a mythical element, a divine name, numbers or geometric forms, or the use of abstract technical distinctions, he will attempt to interpret them as containing a deeper meaning related to the gods. These elements in the text often become more important than the extended argument of which they are but small parts. This is not to say that Proclus disregards the overall argument. He also attributes meaning to larger structures in the text, to the way in which arguments develop, and he relates the parts to the whole. It is more a matter of emphasis: minute details of the text gain a much greater weight

19 An example of this is discussed in Opsomer (2000).

20 Cf. Steel (2002).

compared to modern interpretations of the dialogues, which focus almost exclusively on arguments.[21] This is one reason why the modern reader might still benefit from studying Proclus' interpretations. Because his eye for the smallest details of the text, Proclus may draw our attention to meaningful aspects that we might otherwise overlook, even if we will rarely interpret them in the same manner. Also Proclus' interpretation of dramatic aspects of the dialogues is remarkable: what type does a character represent? What does it mean when an interlocutor is dismissed? Do the age differences of the interlocutors express hierarchical relations? What does the colour of this person's hair express, or the type of clothes he wears, etc.? Proclus, like other late ancient commentators of Plato (one may think of Hermias,[22] who is closest to him), almost invariably allegorizes such elements of the narrative.[23]

The distinction between the general argument and philosophical positions presented in a text, on the one hand, and the details whose correct understanding can lead to deeper insights, on the other, corresponds to a scholastic division of the discussion of separate lemmata into a general section followed by a discussion of separate expressions. Proclus indeed anticipates the practice in the school of Olympiodorus to divide the treatment of the lemmata into a *theoria*- and a *lexis*-section.[24] While Proclus does not employ the word *theoria* in this context – he sometimes uses *pragmata*, but not as a technical term –, the term *lexis* is used a lot.

We have seen that Proclus regarded Plato primarily as an inspired theologian, the most perfect teacher and ultimate authority in theology, who

21 There is one big exception to this rule: the Tübingen school with its Milan dependency. These advocates of the unwritten doctrines, not unlike the Neoplatonists, mine the texts in their search for clues about hidden doctrines. Now it cannot be denied that the interlocutors of Plato's dialogues repeatedly refer to points on which they cannot elaborate. These are celebrated as *Aussparungsstellen* ("places were something has been left out" or "gaps") by the members of the Tübingen school. See Szlezák (1993) 27–29, 92–105 and Szlezák (1999), 11–13, 51–57. However, these scholars also engage in adventurous interpretations of passages in which the interlocutors do not claim to hold something back.

22 See the article in this volume.

23 For an attempt to revive this kind of interpretation, against what she calls post-modern Plato scholarship, allegedly under the spell of F. Schleiermacher, see Radke–Uhlmann (2006). She argues that the details of the dialogical setting should all be related to the doctrinal core of each dialogue, much in the way Proclus does this. It cannot be claimed that this view has gained wide acceptance, even though her work contains valuable insights. Not merely by coincidence, Schleiermacher is also the bugbear of the Tübingen school – the prophets of Plato's unwritten doctrines. See, e.g., Krämer (2014), 3, 402–4.

24 Festugière (1963), 82–93.

communicated his insights in a systematic way, using precise techniques. These general ideas about the character of Plato's philosophy, which were common in the late ancient Athenian Academy and in the school of Alexandria, explain some other features of his interpretation. The fact that the dialogues were not seen as stemming from different stages of a philosophical development,[25] but as having been produced by someone already in full possession of the complete and final system, makes for a strongly unitarian interpretation of Plato. But whereas any idea of a philosophical development on the part of their author is rejected, philosophical development of the readers is held to be all-important, because they are in the position of the learners. The dialogues and the *Letters* are indeed seen as parts of a pedagogical project: differences in content and approach are understood as largely explainable by their different roles in the pedagogical process. The Neoplatonic school curriculum is meant to reflect Plato's original pedagogical project. As we have seen, different dialogues are held to explain different parts of the theological system, yet in a way the whole system is also present in every single dialogue: everything is in everything. The accomplished student, who has mastered the system, will be able to detect glimpses of transcendent truths even in contexts that seem to have nothing to do with them. The more students are advanced, the more they will see. Proclus, who enjoyed the reputation of having reached the summit of Platonic insight, sees it as his task to explain as much as possible these hidden treasures.

Not only the Platonic corpus as a whole is supposed to form a strong unity, the same is also true for single works. Every single dialogue, so Proclus and other Platonists in the Iamblichean tradition think, is thoroughly composed and therefore characterised by a single target (the *skopos*) and unity of purpose that is so strong and pervasive that even the smallest detail can be explained with reference to this single purpose. Every detail contributes to the organic unity of the whole, as Plato makes clear in the *Phaedrus* by his comparison of the speech with a living being (264c3).[26] It is the commentator's task to explain in the light of this *skopos* all possible aspects of the dialogue: its dramaturgy, observations about the character and physical outlook of the interlocutors, seemingly trivial and frivolous comments on remarks made by them.[27] In the first pages of the commentary on *Alcibiades I* Proclus makes this assumptions explicit, speaking about the *prooimia* of the dialogues: the introductions are neither invented by Plato "for the sake of dramatic charm (for this manner of

25 Sheppard (2014), 57–58.

26 *in Parm.* 659.11–13. See also *in Remp.* 1.11.9–12.

27 Dillon (1999), 206–7.

composition is far beneath the exalted mind of the philosopher)" nor do they aim at accurate historical narrative, "for it is neither plausible nor at all possible that every event or saying in the order in which they happen should be selected with a view to the single end aimed at by the works of Plato." Rather the circumstances described depend on the general purpose of the dialogue.[28] Within the limits of this framework Proclus is a masterful and creative exegete. Even gullible modern readers will find this type of comments all too far-fetched, but now and then even critical and down-to-earth readers may be surprised by some valuable insight. For whatever one may further think about the Neoplatonists, they knew their Plato extremely well. Also the general idea to look at the dialogues as part of a pedagogical project as well as the suggestion that it may be worthwhile to think about the meaning of details may be valuable for contemporary students of Plato.[29]

Proclus' commentaries usually begin with a long prologue, in which he discusses the target or subject-matter of the work (the *skopos* or *prothesis*), the division into chapters (the *tomê* into *kephalaia*, or *divisio textus*) and the arrangement of its parts (*oikonomia*), sometimes also the literary form (*eidos, kharaktêr*), the time, setting and occasion (*kairos*, *hypothesis*), the interlocutors (*prosôpa*).[30] This list of "topics to be discussed before the study of a text" was part of the commentary tradition.[31] Also for the answers provided to these preliminary questions, Proclus was dependent upon the tradition. Let us take a brief look at the question of the *skopos* in the extant commentaries. In this context, Proclus always discusses prominent views held by his predecessors, sometimes at considerable length, and offers his own view, which is often more or less that of his teachers. The target of the *First Alcibiades* is knowledge of ourselves, that is, of what we really are – our essence (5.15–10.23 Segonds). For the *Cratylus*, we only have a summary of Proclus' own words: the *skopos* is "to describe the generative activity and assimilative power of souls at the lowest levels of reality. They demonstrate this power, which they have as part

28 *in Alc.* 18.15–19.9 Segonds. (trans.) O'Neill. See also *in Parm.* I, 658.23–659.17 Steel.

29 There is also some truth in the following statement by Cleary (2006), 135: "Proclus might well serve as an object lesson with regard to the necessary hermeneutical situation of any reader of ancient texts; namely that there is no such thing as an interpretation that is completely free of all presuppositions." Probably however, reading Proclus will fail to have this effect on most contemporary readers, who are more likely to be stunned and amused by Proclus' prejudices, so that the need to think about their own becomes even less pressing.

30 Festugière (1963), 81.

31 Mansfeld (1994), 30–37.

of their nature, through the correctness of names."[32] It is remarkable that Proclus defines the *Cratylus* not as a dialogue about language or names, but about psychology.[33] The description of the *skopos* of the *Timaeus* includes a reference to the iconic mode of theological teaching: the dialogue aims at "physical inquiry (*physiologia*), examining the same matters simultaneously in images (*en eikosin*) and in originals (*en paradeigmasin*), in wholes and in parts. It has been filled throughout with all the finest rules of physical theory, tackling simples for the sake of complexes, parts for the sake of wholes, and images for the sake of their originals, leaving none of the originative causes of nature outside the scope of inquiry."[34]

The emphasis on the richness of the *Timaeus* is no coincidence. After all, this is one of the two most perfect works in which everything is somehow contained. Theology is an important topic, yet the nature of the gods and their relations are revealed through the particular natures that are their images at lower levels of reality. This dialogue will therefore also contain many important teachings regarding these images themselves, so that its primary aim is the study of nature (*physiologia*). Despite Plato's qualification of his physical account as "likely" or "resembling" (*eikos*), Proclus thinks his inquiry into nature is characterised by precision (*akribeia*),[35] because it is based on the hypothetical method of the geometers. As Proclus sees it, Plato deduces theorems from starting points in the form of definitions, hypotheses, axioms, and common notions. The fact that the physical account is "resembling" is interpreted as imposing certain constraints on the author. It means that the author has made it as likely as is humanly possible, or as Plato himself puts it: not less likely than rivalling accounts and if possible more likely than them (*Tim.* 48c2–e1). The second perfect and even more sublime dialogue is the *Parmenides* – whereas the *Timaeus* primarily focuses on the physical world, the *Parmenides* embraces the treatment of intelligibles and teaches us all the divine orders (*in Tim.* I 1.12.30–13.7). Its target is defined as "all things insofar as they are the offspring of one <cause>, are dependent upon one <cause> and insofar as they are thereby deified" (*in Parm.* I, 641.1–5 Steel).[36] Proclus includes a long discussion of other views about the *skopos* of the *Parmenides*, which amounts to a summary of the history of interpretation of this central dialogue. His own formulation of the target is essentially that of Syrianus, but the last clause, containing the

32 *in Crat.* 1, p.1.1–4 Pasquali. (trans.) Van den Berg.

33 Van den Berg (2008), 96–98.

34 *in Tim.* I 1.17–24. (trans.) Tarrant. See also Cleary (2006), 136.

35 *in Tim.* I 3.14; 1.7.5; Cleary (2006), 136.

36 Tarrant and Baltzly (2007), 17.

reference to deification, was added by himself. Finally, in his discussion of the *skopos* of the *Republic* Proclus rejects two views that are too limited: the *Republic* is neither just about the constitution, nor about justice alone. Proclus' solution is to combine these two. He hastens to add, however, that there are not two *skopoi*, for that would not be allowed, but just one (1.11.5–13), since justice is nothing but the constitution of the soul that lives in accordance with right reason (1.14.6–7).

The unity of purpose does not mean that a dialogue cannot be interpreted at different levels, quite on the contrary. There may be several levels at which a dialogue can be understood, but there is always a unity of focus. Even if a deeper understanding requires us to look beyond the letter of the text, the literal interpretation usually remains valid. An example is Proclus' interpretation of the history of the war between Athens and Atlantis as told in the *Timaeus.* Proclus does not deny the historicity of this episode, but rather adds a different layer by claiming that the events described reflect the physical and theological doctrines expounded later in the same dialogue. The historical story mirrors facts about the physical world, whose first causes are transcendent. Proclus emphasises that this kind of multi-level exegesis has been made possible because Plato has not chosen to adopt a straightforward sequential way of story-telling. Rather, by selecting and ordering his material, Plato made sure it could be understood as revealing other truths as well, besides the historical.[37] Another famous example is the narratological complexity of certain dialogues, such as the four nested conversations in the *Parmenides.* Proclus explains the importance of the number four as well as the ontological level to which each of these conversations correspond.[38] Moreover, he interprets the presence of the three characters, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, as a reflection not of one, but of two triads: the triad Being-Life-Intellect, and a triad of three levels of Intellect, the unparticipated Intellect, the Intellect participated by the divine soul, and the particular intellect.[39] It is remarkable at first sight, but quite common in Proclus, that an element, such as a character of the dialogue, receives more than one allegorical explanation, which are held to be compatible with one another. This peculiar feature was inherited by the later tradition from Iamblichus.

It is no coincidence that the exegesis of the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides* involves greater complexities than that of other dialogues. The reason for this is double: on the one hand, these two dialogues encompass all of reality,

37 *in Tim.* I 19.4–8. Cf. Dillon (1999), 211.

38 Dillon (1999), 213–17; Tarrant and Baltzly (2007), 17.

39 *in Parm.* I 628.1–21 Steel.

on the other they were believed to be written for an advanced audience, so that also their commentaries should address readers with a very high degree of proficiency. Because of the way the Platonic curriculum was organised in the Academy and the close connection between the classes and the writing of commentaries, the intended audience of the commentaries were meant to reflect the intended audience of the dialogues. In the same way that apparent doctrinal differences between the dialogues could be explained by the different audiences for which they were written, differences between the commentaries vary in accordance with the different intellectual and moral levels of the audience.[40] One could indeed expect a higher degree of sophistication from an advanced student compared to a novice. This accounts for the fact that appeals to the finer points of ontology in the commentary on the *First Alcibiades* are mostly lacking.

Proclus' Plato may be fundamentally theological in outlook, yet not all of Proclus' philosophy nor Plato's role in it can be reduced to theology. In the commentaries Proclus extensively discusses matters of ethics, political philosophy, psychology, and the philosophy of nature. In all of these domains, Plato is clad with the greatest, uncontested and in fact unassailable authority. The case is slightly different for matters that border on science. Since Plato is not supposed to be a doctor, a mathematician, or an astronomer, Proclus looks for information about their subjects in the writings of specialists. Even for these domains, however, he will not readily admit that Plato made any mistakes. Therefore, when the specialists appear to disagree with Plato, he will come up with some argument that rescues Plato, for instance by saying that Plato was not interested in the empirical phenomena, but can be seen to be right if one understands that his account really pertains to their transcendent causes.[41] Thus, even concerning domains for which there is no principled reason to regard Plato as the highest authority, he still has the last word.

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40 This is also true for Neoplatonic text: the doctrinal sophistication of the *Tria opuscula* is less than that of *PT* or the *in Parm.*, for instance. Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotle for the same reasons avoid the intricacies of Platonic metaphysics, even in those cases where Aristotle's assertions were considered to be in harmony with Plato: first, it was not Aristotle's intention to talk about the fine points of theology, secondly, the intended readers of those commentaries were not yet ready to grasp the full complexity of the Platonic system.

41 For some striking examples from the field of astronomy, see Opsomer (2012).

CHAPTER 28

Damascius the Platonic Successor: Socratic Activity and Philosophy in the 6th Century CE

Sara Ahbel-Rappe

I Introduction

Damascius (ca. 462–538)[1] was head of the Platonic Academy in Athens in 529 CE when the Christian Emperor Justinian issued a decree that banned the teaching of philosophy in that city.[2] Upon the closing of the Academy, Damascius led a band of presumably Platonist philosophers out of Athens into exile. We are particularly fortunate in possessing not only a significant number of Platonic Commentaries by Damascius or derived from his writings, but also in possessing fragments from his semi-autobiographical work, *The Philosophical History*, or *Life of Isidore* (henceforth *PH*). Damascius lectured or composed commentaries on Plato's dialogues in keeping with the Neoplatonic curriculum developed

1 For the dates of Damascius, cf. Athanassiadi (1999), 19 and earlier, Westerink (1977), 7. Scholars rely on Damascius' semi-autobiographical *Philosophical History*, fragments 56 and137b to arrive at a date of ca. 462 for Damascius' birth. In fragment 56, Damascius describes himself as a mere youth when he delivered a funeral oration for Aedesia, matron of his school of rhetoric in Alexandria. In fragment 137b, according to the reconstruction of Athanassiadi, Damascius describes his departure from Alexandria during the persecution of 488/9, after having attended the school for nine years. Subtracting nine from 489, and then another 18, we arrive at ca. 462.

2 This account follows the reconstruction of Watts (2004), 168–82. The only direct evidence concerning the closure of the school is a notice from John Malalas' *Chronicle* 18.47:

> During the consulship of Decius, the emperor issued a decree and sent it to Athens ordering that no one should teach philosophy nor interpret astronomy nor in any city should there be lots cast using dice.

According to Watts, here we see a rescript issued in 529 generally against the practice of various forms of divination, but specifically targeting the teaching of astronomy and philosophy at Athens. In C.J. 1.11.9 and C.J. I.11.10, dated to 531 CE by Watts, the estates and endowment funds of the late Athenian Academy were subject to confiscation. This is also the date of the famous exile of the Academy members to Persia.

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in the third century and early fourth centuries under the influence of Iamblichus.[3] Still extant are either commentaries or substantial evidence for them, including the *I Alcibiades*, *Phaedo*, *Philebus*, and *Parmenides*. Of these, the *Commentary on the Parmenide*s was written by Damascius himself, while the *Alcibiades* commentary survives as quotations in a commentary by Olympiodorus. The *Phaedo* and *Philebus* commentaries survive in the form of reports "*apo phones*", or lecture notes from a series given by Damascius. We know of other commentaries from internal references within the extant Damascian corpus: there are traces of commentaries on the *Sophist*, *Timaeus*, *Laws* I and II, and the *Republic*.[4] Finally, Damascius wrote a self-standing treatise, *Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles* (hereafter, *PA*),[5] which is in many ways a dialectical interrogation of Platonist metaphysics, often in response to puzzles raised by Iamblichus and addressed by Proclus.

Owing to all of this activity, Damascius represents the richest or at least most prolific source for the late Athenian Platonic commentary tradition after Proclus. But prolific does not necessarily equate with important or original. The question of Damascius' substantial contribution to the Platonic commentary tradition is the subject of this essay. At first glance, the prospects for Damascius' originality do not look very high. Damascius is writing some years after Proclus and what amounts to two centuries after Iamblichus. What we find in his writings is a systematic tendency to criticize the developments of Proclus' metaphysics by introducing and fundamentally elevating a prior interpretation of Iamblichus. In fact, all too often Damascius is most interesting as a source for reconstructing a no longer extant commentary of Proclus rather

3 For a more comprehensive discussion of the putative contents of these lost works, readers should consult the very thorough discussion of Hoffmann (1994). English translations are available for the following works: Simplicius' commentary on the *De Caelo* as well as Damascius' *in Phlb.* and *in Phd.*, the *PA*, and the *PH*.

4 Damascius also lectured on Aristotelian works or at least on topics pursued by members of the Aristotelian commentatary tradition. Of these, the most important are the fragmentary remains of Damascius' treatise *On Number, Space, and Time*, preserved in Simplicius' *in Phys*. The two loci of this treatise's remains are in the Corollary on Space (601–45) and Corollary on Time (773–800). The text of Diels is in *CAG*, IX. For a more detailed discussion of the contents of this work, see Hoffmann (1994), 575. There are also some quotations in Philoponus' *In Meteora* from a work by Damascius entitled *Aristotle's Meteorology*.

5 From the Greek *Peri archôn*. References are given according to the pages of both the Ruelle edition (R) and that of Combès with Westerink's text (CW).

than for any autonomous interpretive points.[6] Granted, Damascius might be cited for one or two innovations compared to the prior exegetical tradition. Examples can be seen in his theory (discussed below) of the erotic intellect in his *Commentary on the Philebus* or his demarcation between the One as a principle of metaphysics versus the Ineffable (*Arrheton*), so transcendent, as it were, as not to be even transcendent, in the *PA*.

Nevertheless, these creative moments stand out from his prolix attention to matters of exegesis already developed by his predecessors. Therefore the reader is left with a dilemma as to the importance of Damascius in the tradition of Platonism that never fully resolves itself based on the available evidence: how are we to evaluate his contributions to Platonism or even to formulate the idea that he is an original philosopher? In what follows, I will both survey some of his traditional approaches to Platonic commentary as well as suggest that Damascius did make an important original contribution to the reception of Plato in the *PA*. As I hope to show, along with his detailed exegeses of the textual *lemmata* that are shaped by his negotiations with the previous commentary traditions, Damascius brought a contemplative method to these engagements, a method that was informed by his historically unique position as the last of the Platonic scholarchs.

This article will briefly examine three examples of Damascius' approach to commenting on Plato's dialogues and conclude by glancing at the *PA*. It will then conclude by arguing that unlike other late antique commentators, Damascius valorizes the Socratic dimension of the Platonic tradition. What I mean by Socratic here is that Damascius infuses the *PA* with aporetic irresolution as a response to the previous dogmatism of the tradition. Particularly evident is the almost ubiquitous use of aporia and its cognates in the *PA* together with other aporetic language (as for example, ἀμηχανία, περιτροπή, κενεμβατεῖν).[7] This vocabulary tells us that Damascius is not only writing in the methodological vein of similar treatises, in that he is exploring questions by arguing *in utramque partem*.[8] Instead, *aporia* and *odis*, profound doubt and the effort to resolve that doubt, preoccupy or even obsess Damascius in a way that reverts to key features

6 One important example of how Damascius is used to reconstruct a lost portion of Proclus' commentary work is the *Commentary on the Parmenides*. For a discussion of the relationship between Damascius' *in Parm.* and that of Proclus, as well as how the former helps us to recover the latter, by virtue of his attention to the Proclean *lemmata*, see Combès (2002), xvii–xxvii.

7 For a remarkable list of all of Damascius' aporetic vocabulary, see Metry-Tresson (2012), 79–81.

8 Here I agree with Metry-Tresson (2012) and disagree with Addey (2014).

of the Socratic method.[9] As Metry-Tresson (2012) shows in her book on the subject of aporetic experience in the *PA*, for Damascius, aporia is salutary; it is a written technique that strives to bring about what I would describe as the shock and awe of the Socratic encounter. The *PA*, again according to Metry-Tresson, is designed to facilitate the experience of aporia, thus turning the reader in an introspective direction, directly interrogating her own mind, and pointing her away from the mere accumulation of academic jargon.[10] I would add that in using the language of aporetic irresolution so thoroughly throughout the *PA*, Damascius differs from other late antique Platonists, notably the author of the Anonymous *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, who rather more timidly explains such features of the Socratic dialogues as "probably" and "maybe" and "perhaps, I think," as Plato's attempt to "express himself more accurately."[11]

Thus, in discussing Damascius' interpretations of Plato, we might be permitted a certain operating division: 1) work intended to nuance the previous centuries' cumulative scholastic results in the form of points of dogma, and 2) work that redirects Neoplatonic methods of reading Plato. The commentaries fall into the first category; *PA* with its "problems and solutions" falls into the latter. One could say that the late Athenian Neoplatonist traditions represented by Proclus and earlier, Iamblichus, rely heavily on the discourse of symbolism as a key interpretive tool. So for example, allegorical readings complement ritual language in Proclus' literary exegesis of the dialogues, just because of Proclus' literary assumption that each dialogue constitutes a complete world, wherein each element (frame, character, setting) is salient for the total meaning. As such, the soteriological function of symbolism, to elevate the soul, was a functional aspect of the dialogues for Proclus.[12] Damascius instead values the pedagogical function of *aporia*. As he says in the *Phaedo* Commentary:

> One must raise *aporiai* on the basis of the underlying realities themselves, not just on the basis of what seems to be true about them; moreover,

9 Damascius also references the Socrates of Plato's *Theaetetus* through his recursion to the term *odis*, birth pangs, as a description of how the philosopher progresses to wisdom.

10 This brief allusion to Metry-Tresson cannot do justice to the richness of her topic. But see especially Metry-Tresson (2012), 75, where she discusses Damascius' aporetic techniques as "engendrant un nouvel état de conscience."

11 οἷον προσδιοριζόμενος, Westerink (1962), 22 = Westerink & Trouillard (1990), 15.13.

12 The most important book on the Neoplatonic commentaries on Plato in terms of their literary function remains Coulter (1976).

> *aporiai* should concern the depth of these realities, which is not apparent to the many, and should not be concerned with what is facile. (34)

For Damascius, interrogating conventions operates in conjunction with awakening the desire to know or the desire for truth.[13] As truth can only be found within the person doing the seeking, aporia ultimately becomes the gateway to self-knowledge. In this reliance on aporetic self-knowledge, Damascius is profoundly Socratic.[14]

II Damascius in Context: Philosophy's "Extreme Old Age"

Damascius occupies a unique position as the last of the Diadochoi, not only in terms of this simple historical fact, but also because his writings evince a profound awareness of the waning fortunes of the contemporary Platonic Academy. Proclus wrote in the 450s; Damascius was active eighty years later, at the very end of the arc of ancient philosophy, a vantage point that he continually documents in his vivid accounts in the *PH*. Damascius' self-appointed task was, despite the hostile environment, to preserve Platonic philosophy as a field of benefaction for humankind. Damascius quotes his own teacher Isidore commenting on the decline of philosophy in Isidore's time when he writes:

> Plato has said that no greater good than philosophy has ever come down to mankind, but it has come to pass that nowadays philosophy stands not on a razor's edge but truly on the brink of extreme old age. (*PH* 150.5)

Inveighing against the philosophers' enclave in Athens, the heavy hand of Justinian purged even Christian philosophers such as Origen from ranks of the Church; pagan philosophers were even more vulnerable.[15] Meanwhile, the ossification resulting from over one thousand years of academic traditions fused the brittle bones, so to say, of the philosopher's aging figure. How, in the midst of this decay and destruction, could Damascius seek a way to

13 Damascius associates what he calls "the search for truth" with Socrates at *PH* 116E: "No less than Socrates in the search for truth."

14 See especially Metry-Tresson (2012): on the self-illuminating function of aporetic techniques in the *PA*.

15 On the vulnerability of pagan philosophers in Alexandria, see Watts (2006), 210–25. On the Anathemas against Origen and his excommunication from the Church under Justinian, see Clark (1992) and Edwards (2002).

empower the philosopher's voice? This empowerment came from a renewed attempt to invigorate philosophical method and to valorize the philosophical way of life.

The *Life of Isidore* or *Philosophical History* is a lost work partially preserved in fragments from Photius' *Bibliotheca* and from entries in the *Suda*. This work is one of the more widely studied of Damascius' writings due to its great interest as a source of late-antique intellectual history and politics.[16] The *PH* introduces us to the major figures in the philosophical community of Alexandria, especially Isidore; it follows Damascius' intellectual biography as a young student of rhetoric in Alexandria; it describes the persecution of Hypatia who was martyred in 415; it moves to events in Athens in the 490s following the death of Proclus; it discusses the final destruction of Horapollo's school and the flight of Damascius and Isidore from Alexandria; it ends with the arrival of Damascius and Isidore in Athens and the philosophical reforms that Isidore was concerned to foster in the Academy.

Damascius' *Philosophical History* is a hagiographic tribute to Damascius' teacher, Isidore, in terms of his cosmic mission (5 a, b, c): "My friend, someone might object, just what is the proof that your philosopher [sc. Isidore] originated from that class of souls?" (6a) Damascius' central theme is the restoration of philosophy, a task for which a certain class of souls receives embodiment. Isidore's soul is the subject of the *PH*: "flying down from the vault of heaven, it attached itself to life on earth" (5b). For this idea of the higher soul as a kind of savior soul, we can compare the late Athenian view of Socrates, as recorded in Hermias' *Commentary on the Phaedrus*. The opening lines of this commentary reveal that the school of Syranius understood Socrates as a higher soul,[17] an avatar of wisdom whose purpose in embodiment was to direct all human beings to the pursuit of philosophy. Hermias writes: "Socrates was sent into the world of birth and death for the purpose of benefiting the human race and especially the minds of young people." (17.1)

In fact, Damascius explicitly links Isidore to Socrates throughout the *PH*, as when he writes: "When defending Socrates Isidore spoke too profoundly for his

16 Zinzten (1967). There are two editions of the work: Zintzen's edition of (1967) and Athanassiadi's edition and English translation of (1999). Damascius' life as reflected in his study of Isidore has been reconstructed by Asmus (1909–1910) from the fragments found in Photius and the Suda. Zintzen's edition carefully follows the placement of the fragments based on Asmus' arrangement.

17 On the Neoplatonic Socrates see Layne and Tarrant (eds.) (2014). On Socrates as the symbol of the higher soul or individual intellect in Proclus and the school of Syrianus see Ambury (2014).

pupils' understanding."[18] As Plato surveyed fifth century BCE Athens, remarking on its varied population of Sophists and citizens in the Socratic dialogues, so in the *PH* Damascius canvasses the cities of Athens and of Alexandria in terms of their intellectual landscape during the fifth century CE.[19] These cities are populated with philosophers and pretenders who exhibit a wide range of virtues and vices. Moreover, just as Sophistry formed the antithesis of the Socratic pursuit of genuine wisdom, so Damascius both repudiates rhetoric[20] and castigates teachers who, like the Sophists, pander to the prevailing *doxa* for the sake of gain. Damascius describes the terrible compromise of Ammonius, the head of the Alexandrian school,[21] who. "suffering from the vice of greed and viewing everything in terms of profit, came to an agreement with the Bishop in the reigning prejudice [sc. Christianity][22] who oversaw these matters." In this sense, the practice of philosophy as a way of life that departs from what Damascius calls, using code, "the reigning prejudice," evokes the charges against Socrates who, like Damascius and Isidore, does not believe in the gods the city believes in.[23]

The narrative of the *PH* unfolds as a chronicle of Isidore's return to Athens for the accession of the *diadochia*, or Platonic succession. Isidore manifests civic virtue in exhibiting bravery during persecution, and strength of character in the face of political intrigues and general malaise within the Academy. Damascius also compares Isidore's courage in the face of persecution in Alexandria to Socrates' resistance to the Thirty tyrants. He writes of Isidore's moral stature that he was "no less than Socrates in the search for the truth; for he too was not able to obey the command of the Thirty Tyrants who had ordered him not to hold discourse."[24]

Throughout the book, the persistent theme is of Isidore and his co-philosophers living under the threat of philosophy's demise; the book

18 *PH* 37Bc

19 On the *PH* as a survey of the Platonic school in terms of the actors' progress on the scale of virtue, see O'Meara (2006). O'Meara writes, "I propose taking the Neoplatonic scale of virtues and using it as a key for reading Damascius' Life of Isidore." (78) See also Watts (2006), chapter 8, "The Alexandrian Schools of the Fifth Century," for other sources on the tumultuous times for pagan philosophers in the city of Alexandria.

20 *Suda* IV 292, 23 s. v. ῥητορική οὐδὲ τῇ ῥητορικῇ προσέσχε τὸν νοῦν, ὅ τι καὶ λόγου ἄξιον, τὸ σοβαρὸν αὐτῆς καὶ ἀλαζονικὸν εὐλαβηθεὶς καὶ μισήσας.

21 On Ammonius see Watts (2006), 222–31. See also Sorabji (2005). For the text see *PH* 118b.

22 Saffrey (1975).

23 Cf. *Ap.* 24b9–c1 on the charges against Socrates.

24 *PH* 116E.

as a whole is pervaded by distressing metaphors such as old-age, sunset, demise and so forth. We read that "the heart of truth is in danger of being extinguished" (36a). Again, the same theme emerges in 5c: "I thought that he was shouting as he descended into generation, 'I have arrived here from a better place'".[25] Thus the *PH* stands as a narrative account of Isidore's assignment – the rejuvenation of philosophy and, perhaps, is written in the Socratic vein of practicing philosophy against a rising tide of anti-intellectualism.[26] Certainly Damascius deliberately compares Isidore to Socrates in his opposition to a Christian intolerance that threatened to silence the voice of the divine.[27]

III Damascius the Platonic Commentator

Above we saw that Damascius is not known for originality in his commentary work. Athanassiadi quotes Westerink as referring to Damascius' *Commentary on the Parmenides* as "critical observations on Proclus," and to Damascius' "commentaries on commentaries."[28] To the extent that Damascius attempts to innovate, it is fairly clear that his innovations are for the most part inspired by the earlier work of Iamblichus, and this is true even of the *PA*, which represents an exception to the commentary format. For example, in the *Commentary on the Parmenides*, after delineating the *skopos* of the Third Hypothesis (a discussion of the souls that descend or become embodied), Damascius launches directly into a doxographical controversy that starts even before Plotinus but is most clearly outlined in *Enn.* IV.8 [6] 8, i.e. the doctrine of the undescended soul. As Plotinus writes:

> If I am to be bold enough to express more clearly my own opinion against that of others, our soul does not descend in its entirety, but part of its always remains in the intelligible world.

25 Athanassiadi (1999).

26 On the anti-intellectual atmosphere in Athens during the time of Socrates see Janko (2006). Watts (2006), 218–20, discusses an atmosphere of popular hostility against pagan philosophers in Alexandria in the 480s.

27 For example, Damascius' spiritual sightseeing tour with Isidore after their flight from Alexandria involved visiting shrines and oracles, presumably to hear the voices of the gods whose silence seemed imminent owing to the pervasiveness of Christian opposition.

28 Athanassiadi (1999), 46.

When discussing his own doctrine of incarnation, Damascius employs his usual methodology, in which Iamblichus is a springboard for the criticism of what Damascius considers to be the improper innovations of Proclus. Consider the following passage (*In Parm.* III 15.1–5 CW = 254.3–10 R):

> In addition to these considerations, if an essence is either eternal or generally free from change, it does not descend into birth and death at one time, and then ascend from birth and death at another. Rather, it is always above. If it is always above, then it will also have an activity that is always above. And so on this assumption, Plotinus' account is true, viz., that the soul does not descend as a whole. But [Proclus] does not allow this argument. For how could it be, when one part of the soul is in the intelligible, that the other part is in the worst evil? Therefore the essence of the soul descends, becoming more divisible instead of more uniform, and instead of substantial, becoming more involved with generation.

Needless to say, the entire controversy surrounding the descent of the soul, beginning from *Ennead* IV.8, amounts to perhaps the most important chapter in the reception of Plato's *Phaedrus* and the myth of the soul's fall and incarnation at 246a–256e. Allusions to the myth of the psychic chariot, the incarnation of the soul after the molting of its wings, and its pre-carnate life in the super celestial world, are ubiquitous in the religious and philosophical texts of the Roman Empire. The text implies answers to a host of doctrinal and ideological issues, fueling speculations on the status of both mind and body. To what extent is soul a bona fide member of the divine order and to what extent is it a finite creature? The story of the charioteer, originating in the super celestial realm but after a violent cataclysm, crashing in the terrestrial realm and embarking on a series of endless transmigrations, helps these authors to negotiate the problem of how ultimate the separation of the human and the divine proves to be.

In the last part of this citation, Damascius argues against the position that Proclus presents in virtually all of his writings on the soul, as for example in the *Elements of Theology:* "Every participated soul has an eternal substance but a temporal activity" (§191, 166–7).

Returning to the text of Damascius we find that earlier on he refutes the position of Proclus and aligns himself with Iamblichus by arguing that an eternal essence will likewise have an eternal activity, but a changing essence will have a changing activity. And so Damascius reluctantly spells out his own position, one that accords with Iamblichus yet sounds, on the whole, somewhat unorthodox.

> Proclus envisions that the changes implied by the conclusions are connected to the activities and also the powers of the soul. For [he says that] its essence is eternal, but its coming to be is connected to its projections of the various lives and thoughts, which in turn are connected to time, while its essence is atemporal, which he understands as eternal. We on the other hand have already shown in our *Commentary on the Timaeus* that the soul as a whole is simultaneously subject to birth and death and also not subject to birth and death. Moreover now too we understand the conclusions [of Proclus concerning the Third Hypothesis] to apply to [the soul's] essence. (*In Parm.* 11.20–12.5 CW = 252.7–13 R)[29]

Another example of Damascius working with the interpretation of Proclus can be seen in his *Philebus* Commentary. For Platonists of late antiquity, it is standard practice to associate the three principles introduced at *Philebus* 23c, limit, unlimited and mixed, with the first stages in the devolution of reality after the One.[30] In the metaphysics of both Proclus and Iamblichus, *peras* and *apeiron* constitute a dyad after the One, becoming conduits of unity and multiplicity, and introducing the possibility of reality outside of the ineffable first principle. The third nature, the *Philebus'* Mixed, introduces a subsequent stage of development, which Proclus and Iamblichus understand as the intelligible world, or the realm of Being. Thus the three kinds of Plato's *Philebus* are the fulcrum around which reality proliferates and the hidden fullness of the One pours forth into the world of manifestation. Damascius refines this interpretation of the dialogue by positing an independent nature for the Mixed, considering it not yet below the level of the One, but rather as an aspect of the One.

Neoplatonist commentators focus on 27d7, where Plato seems to say that the mixed is not composed of the two prior principles:

> We will, I think, assign it to the third kind, for it is not a mixture of just two elements but of the sort where all that is unlimited is tied down by limit. It would seem right, then to make our victorious form of life part of that kind. (trans.) Cooper.

29 On this dispute concerning the descent of the soul see Steel (1978). One cannot discuss here the consequences of Damascius' endorsement of Iamblichus or how genuine it is.

30 As Dillon (2003) has shown, it is conceivable that Pythagorean interpretations of this part of the *Phlb.*, according to which the indefinite (*apeiron*) functioned as a dyad that acted upon the One or first principle, resulting in the development and elaboration of the order of primary beings, already figured into the early Academy. For Proclus on *Phbl.* see *PT* III 10, p. 42.

Now, Proclus interprets Plato's remarks that refer to the best form of life, the "victorious form of life," as pertaining to just that set of metaphysical principles, *peras* and *apeiron*, that arise from his first principle, the One. Proclus writes:

> Let no one be astonished that Socrates in the *Philebus* assumes that the mixed is prior to the limit and the unlimited, whereas we in turn show that the limit and the unlimited transcend the mixed. For each of these [limit and unlimited] is in two senses, the one is prior to being, the other is in being, the one generates the mixed, and the other is an element of the mixed. (*PT* III 10, 42.13–18)

Damascius works to disprove this interpretation of Proclus. Damascius insists that the Mixed is not generated, is a Henad, that is, an aspect of the One itself, and has its own distinctive nature. In sections 55–58, criticizing Proclus' interpretation, Damascius suggests that Proclus' way of reading the passage necessitates an infinite regress:

> [...] it will be necessary to introduce a principle for the Mixed that has the unique character of the Mixed, and is itself called "Mixed", ... but in this way we shall go on positing principles before principles indefinitely.

Damascius differs from Proclus therefore in conceiving of the Mixed (i.e., Being) as incipient within the realm of the One, as the power of the One to be all things, as not only a manifestation of the One, but actually the One, considered in its aspect as all things. Damascius would want to query, how can the intelligible realm reveal the One if the One lacks what the latter reveals? If all things are forever outside of the One, then they cannot reveal the One. Again, we see Damascius working against Proclus' interpretations of Plato but ultimately reviling Proclus' reliance on the causal principle that he constantly invokes, that the cause is greater than the effect.

One last example of Damascius' activity as a reader of Plato shows him as a somewhat more original exegete. In *Lectures on the Philebus*, 12–16, the brief excursus on "the appetitive function of intelligence" is echoed in *PA*. Commenting on *Philebus* 11b4–c2 (is intelligence or pleasure or their mixture the human good?) Damascius suggests that appetite is an important aspect of intellect, or rather that "the isolation of intelligence is forced and impossible ... for the love of truth is a strong emotion and so is the joy of attaining it." (*Lectures on the Philebus* 87 Westerink) Another way of stating the solution is to say that, contrary to the strict tripartite division of appetite, emotion, and intellect of Plato's psychology, Damascius assigns the faculty that may be translated as

"desiring inquiry" (*zetetikos*), an analogous function to the *orektikon*, or appetitive faculty. Thus at *PA* II 155.16–22 CW = 185.17–22 R, Damascius actually defines intellect relative to the intelligible as "that which is capable of desire."

Love for truth, desire for the real, and so forth, had obviously been central to Plato's discussion of eros in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. Nevertheless, Damascius develops this train of thought in ways that are characteristic of the Iamblichean and post-Iamblichean idea, in which aspects of the human soul that are deemed hindrances on the intellectual path according to conventional Platonism, may be cultivated and, given the proper direction of the soul, be used to assist the aspirant in his quest for truth.

IV The *Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, a Socratic Treatise?

We have seen so far that Damascius practiced the traditional methods of Neoplatonist dialectic or hermeneutics, by producing commentaries on the dialogues of Plato. And yet, owing to his historical position as, in some sense, the last pagan professor, Damascius ventured outside of his role as Commentator, or was perhaps willing to see the limits of this metaphysical tradition, over one thousand years old by the time he wrote. At least, this is how I understand the *PA*. Despite the word, "Solutions", in its title, the work is fundamentally aporetic. It offers at once a systematic criticism of Proclus' metaphysics and theory of causation, Proclus' oft cited principle that the cause is always greater than the effect.[31] But the treatise is so punctuated with the vocabulary of puzzlement, aporia, intellectual limitations, and helplessness in the face of this aporia, that we need to ask about the function of aporia itself in this treatise.

This aporia appears at the very beginning of the treatise and comes to suggest that the very practice of metaphysics in Proclus' sense, that is, a causal explanation of how things got to be the way they are, how multiplicity emerges from the One, is flawed. And since the human mind is incapable of grasping the absolute, yet is also characterized by an innate affinity for that absolute, *aporia* and *odis*, irresolution and spiritual striving, are the two engines of the *PA*. I would go so far as to say that in their very lexical functions, they point to Socrates. Not a Socrates who wrote nothing, but a Socrates whose highest wisdom consisted in the realization that he had no wisdom, great or small. (*Ap*. 25d)

31 Lloyd (1976) analyzing *ET* §7.

PA simultaneously offers a nearly exhaustive critical précis of Neoplatonic ontological architecture, as well as a method designed to question the very explanatory principles by which reality devolves into that architecture. Damascius poses problems concerning the One's causation (how can the One give rise to differentiation?), and the nature of intellection: intellection is a form of reversion, but reversion implies the differentiation between what reverts and that to which it reverts.[32] Nevertheless, in following this procedure, Damascius is still engaged primarily with Proclus as his interlocutor. Due to this, the *PA* is not strictly a commentary on a Platonic dialogue as it often reads more like a critique of Proclus' metaphysics. Damascius operates for the most part by triangulating his views via the earlier positions of Iamblichus, and tends to approve the earlier philosopher's positions over those of Proclus. We have already seen examples of this procedure in Damascius' treatment of the soul's embodiment. We see it at the opening of the treatise:

> Is the so-called "One Principle" of all things beyond all things or is it one among all things, as if it were the summit of those that proceed from it? And are we to say that "all things" are with the [first principle], or after it and [that they proceed] from it? (*PA* I 1)

If someone were to assert this last hypothesis, how could [it] be something outside of all things? For "all things" means, *stricto sensu*, "that from which nothing whatsoever is absent." But the [first] principle is missing. Therefore what comes after the first principle would not be properly speaking "all things", but rather all things up to the point of the first principle.[33]

In this opening discussion, the topic is the relationship between the first principle and what Damascius calls, "all things", that is, anything dependent on that first principle. If we like, we can think of this tag, "all things", as denoting multiplicity. Now, by stipulation, the first principle is transcendent: in that case, it cannot be related to the multiplicity as their first principle. Any relationship in which it might participate violates its transcendence. A transcendent first principle cannot explain the reality of that which is not transcendent. But if there is no cause, no source for all things, then what exactly can the enterprise of "explaining" reality amount to? In this way, he resists the received *doxa* of his tradition, asking those who expound it to think through this very claim, to be able to explain reality.

32 Dillon (1997).

33 Translation from Ahbel-Rappe (2010).

The Socratic disclaimer of knowledge, "just as I do not know, so I do not think that I know," (*Ap.* 21d) offers its adherent an inoculation against the fever of arrogance, the intellectual pride implied by any attempt to create a conceptual or discursive account of reality, as if one were somehow outside that very reality. The disclaimer purges the intellect of all such ambition. One might well ask, if not to offer such an account, what is philosophy's aim? Damascius might reply that one problem with the attempt to set up a doctrine about the real or about the highest principles, is that the kind of stance toward reality is inherently dualistic, even when directed toward the nature of intelligible realities. *Aporia* in this instance implicates the one who inquires and gains traction by questioning the assumption that reality is outside of the one who makes the inquiry. But how could reality eclipse the subject?

In his discussion of intellect, Damascius calls attention to the traditional or maybe better put, Proclean analysis of intellectual knowledge. Proclus' definition implies a substantive differentiation between the knower and the known, a fact that follows from the very description of knowledge as the soul's or mind's cognitive reversion or return to its object, which is being, the real. As Damascius writes,

> Knowledge belongs to things that are either distant from each other or from themselves, and which are divided by means of otherness. Without otherness there could be no knower, no known, and no intermediate term, that is, knowledge. (II 154.14–17 CW = 179.19–21 R)

But the genuine encounter with the One necessarily precludes objective knowledge: "We attempt to look at the sun for the first time and we succeed because we are far away. But the closer we approach the less we see. And at last we see neither [sun] nor other things, since we have completely become the light itself, instead of an enlightened eye." (*PA* I 84.8–12 CW = 56.1–5 R)

Damascius attempts to unsettle the traditional practice of metaphysics precisely because he does want to revivify Neoplatonism as a contemplative path.

> If, in speaking about [the Ineffable], we attempt the following collocations, viz. that it is Ineffable, that it does not belong to the category of all things, and that it is not apprehensible by means of intellectual knowledge, then we ought to recognize that these constitute the language of our own labors. This language is a form of hyperactivity that stops on the threshold of the mystery without conveying anything about it at all. Rather, such language announces the subjective experiences of aporia

> and misapprehension that arise in connection with the One, and that not even clearly but by means of hints." (*PA* I 8.12–19 CW = 7.2–8 R)

A discourse on the Ineffable is not a metaphysical treatise, in the usual sense of the word, as its purpose is to remove confidence in established formulas. The Socratic method, the practice of delivering human beings from their own ignorant determinations about the nature of reality, implies that the philosopher must also refrain from imprisoning them in a metaphysical system that displaces reality itself. Hence *apophasis*, denial or negation, presents itself as a method that not only negates all lesser realities leaving only the Ineffable, but also stands applicable to the language of metaphysics itself.

Aporia, using paradox to break apart the received dogmas and even dogmatic stances of the Neoplatonic inheritance, is one of Damascius' Socratic functions. Like Socrates, Damascius stood at the crossroads of cultural change: ancient traditions were on the brink of extinction and were all too easily and rapidly being replaced by the state-sanctioned ideology. This cultural context that we saw documented in the *PH* in Damascius' stories of persecution at the hands of anti-pagan zealots and also in the very real historical record of Justinian's closure of the Academy, is complemented by an intellectual program. This program can be summed up in many ways, some of which we have already seen: the prevalence of aporia and its markers goes hand in hand with the systematic attack on the possibility of metaphysics as an orientation to reality. Not since the Socratic dialogues has aporia played such a significant role in Platonic writing. And as I hope to show in the conclusion, this Socratic emphasis on aporia is not, for all that, a skeptical stance.

At the same time that his metaphysical treatise, *PA*, is inherently fractious, Damascius is always aware of the richness of the contemplative dimension of life. Plato's portrait of Socrates in a trance, standing in the frozen sleet of winter, contemplating the sun, reminds us that Socrates is not just confrontational; not merely combative. So too, Damascius is concerned to remind the would be philosopher that contemplation implies a kind of direct experience of reality; the assimilation of knower and known, the intimacy or final merging of intellect and the One. To keep alive the ancient wisdom in the last hour of its life in a world that increasingly manifested intolerance, this was a theme that we saw operating in the *PH*. Now Damascius needs to breath life into those fading sparks, stirring the ashes of the dialectical certainties, and demand in their place the very opposite. In place of dogma, Damascius works to instill aporia. In place of knowledge, he works to instill silence, helping the reader give up the desire to grasp reality by means of thought. In these ways, as well, he performs a Socratic function.

In the conclusion to the article, I want to gloss one more item within Damascius' rather more Socratic repertoire, the term alluded to at the beginning of this article as *odis*, or birth pangs. Now the *Theaetetus* is an important dialogue for the late Platonist tradition. Especially Socrates' self-disclosure of his professional ties with Artemis, goddess of childbirth, and his tending of pregnant souls takes on an afterlife among late antique Neoplatonists in connection with Socrates' remarks at 151a. There Socrates tells Theaetetus that

> [...] his associates suffer the same experience as women who are in the process of giving birth. For my associates are in travail, filled with aporia night and day, much more than expectant mothers. My art has the power to awaken this labor pain and then again to assuage it. (151a6–b1)

For Damascius, the Socratic word, "*odis*" becomes a charged term, taking on significance as a complement to the pervasiveness of aporia. Thus Proclus and Damascius use *odis* to refer to the *via negativa*, the way of negation as a path to arriving at what we might call the absolute, or the divine, or simply, the One. Not only does this labor entail the removal of any and every idea about the One, but it also entails a living connection to that One, that is, it implies a kind of genetic relationship to the One, which is revealed as the center of the soul itself.

What follows is a very brief survey of Proclus' use of the term "labor pain" (*odis*) in his own *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* and Damascius' subsequent deployment of this word in the *PA*. As we see in the following passage, Proclus uses the idea of travail to mean the labor of emptiness that consists in the willingness to abandon the self and to remove the sense of separation or selfhood that constitutes the origins of the soul's descent into the world of becoming. In this sense, Proclus finds in *odis* a predilection for the One, a native affinity that, paradoxically, has no object for which it experiences this affinity. Proclus writes:

> [...] all things are what they are through desire for the One through the agency of the One, and in virtue of this striving (κατὰ τὴν ὠδῖνα ταύτην) each, being filled with its proper degree of unity, is likened to the single cause of all things and is not likened to something like it. *in Parm.* 546, 1199.18–25 (trans.) Morrow-Dillon

And again, Proclus discusses the innate affinity that each being has for the One, not owing to an intellectual grasp of the One, but rather, owing to a kind of predilection or rather, the innate reality of the One as it exists in all things.

> The predilection for the One does not come from knowledge, since if it did, what has no share in knowledge could not seek it; but everything has a natural striving (ὠδῖνα) after the One, as also has the soul. What else is the One in us except the operation and energy of this striving? It is therefore this interior understanding of unity, which is a projection and as it were an expression of the One in ourselves, that we call "the One". *in Parm.* 593, 56 Kalbfleisch (trans.) Morrow-Dillon

For Damascius, labor pain is associated with the One in the soul, and with the kind of intimacy or innate awareness of unity that both awakens the soul's striving for the One and makes that identity possible. Labor pain is also associated with ignorance, with that experience of separation that demands restoration. The effort or striving is one factor that ultimately leads to the goal, which is after all, the self-revealing experience of not being different from the One. Damascius writes:

> If someone working through these puzzles should at last come to accept the One as first principle, and should then add as a decisive consideration the grounds that we have no conception or imagination simpler than the One, how then will we speculate concerning what is beyond our most remote speculation and conception? If someone asks this, we will have sympathy with the problem raised (for it seems unsolvable and thinking about it seems without benefit) but nevertheless on the basis of what is more familiar to us, we must stir up the ineffable labor pains in ourselves toward a hidden (for I know not how to express it) consciousness of that sublime truth. (*PA* I 6.7–16 CW = 5.13–19 R)

The center of the self, the light of knowledge, is the *ichnos* or trace of the One; when pressing toward this goal the word that Damascius uses is *odis*, the effort to be centered, or the striving (*odis*) after unity. He employs this terminology because any striving implies duality or separation, and there would be no need for this striving if the identity between self and the One had already been realized. Still, it is a qualified kind of striving because there is no real separation between the center of the self and the One, which is why Damascius and Proclus refer to it as the "One in us."

Again, in the passage *PA* I 8, 12–19 quoted above, Damascius uses the word "birth pang" or "labor pain", in the phrase translated "the language of our own labors", to describe the experience of intellectual purification; birth pang refers to the knowledge of the One that is not actually a form of knowledge; it is not an object to be apprehended by the intellect. It is not a content of the mind.

This excursion into the reception of Socratic *odis*, labor pain, in the texts of Damascius reveals how important the Socratic metaphor became for him. Primarily, labor pain indicates pregnancy, a correlation that we find in Plato's text as well: "whoever does not seem pregnant to me, I realize that they have no need of my services." (*Theatetetus* 151b2) Consequently, this form of aporia is not a sterile negation of knowledge; it is not the equivalent of *epoche* or academic skepticism. Instead, it is associated with the effort to bring forth what is innate; the linkage between parent and child is, for the Neoplatonists, the recognition of the One by the One in us.

In this article, I have tried to do justice to Damascius' Platonic activity, both as the last successor of the scholarchy and as a scholar whose position necessitated his engagement with the prior tradition. I have also suggested that behind Damascius' dogged tracking of Proclus' own commentary work, lies a certain recommendation. Not only should the philosopher free him or herself from the pretense to know what she or he does not know, but only by turning within, relying on self-knowledge and not just the knowledge afforded by the tradition, can the philosopher arrive at wisdom. And in my view, this suggestion is supremely Socratic. As Socrates puts the matter in the *Phaedrus*: "I am not yet able to know myself, in accordance with the Delphic epigram. How very ridiculous is seems to me, when I am ignorant concerning this matter, to investigate foreign matters." (230a)[34]

34 I wish to thank Danielle A. Layne and Harold Tarrant for their criticisms of earlier drafts. Of course any remaining errors and all the views expressed herein are entirely my responsibility.

CHAPTER 29

The Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy

Danielle A. Layne

> Plato himself, too, shortly before his death, had a dream of himself as a swan, darting from tree to tree and causing great trouble to the fowlers, who were unable to catch him. When Simmias the Socratic heard this dream, he explained that all men would endeavor to grasp Plato's meaning, none, however, would succeed, but would interpret him according to his own view, whether theologically or naturally or in any other sense. This is the quality that Homer and Plato have in common: owing to the harmony of their expression they are accessible to everybody, no matter how one wishes to approach them. Anon., *Proleg.* 1.29–38 (cf. Olymp., *in Alc.* 2.156–60)[1]

I Introduction

Dating from the latter half of the 6th century and likely arising from the Alexandrian circle of Neoplatonism,[2] the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* endeavors to offer its students an introduction to reading the enigmatic dialogues of Plato. Starting with the author's biography, the *Prolegomena* repeatedly emphasizes Plato's proximity to the divine in order to substantiate the dialogues' ability to purify readers from lives mired in sensibility. Afterwards, it traces Plato's influences from the poets to the Pre-Socratics and, most especially, Socrates. Here, the *Prolegomena* often (mis)identifies Plato's philosophical views and methods with the character of Socrates but, ultimately,

1 With slight adaptations, all translations and citations for the *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* refer to Westerink (1962/2011). For an excellent introduction to the text and the first Italian translation see Motta (2014).

2 Westerink has convincingly argued this point at (1962/2011), XLI–L. Here, Westerink asserts that the most likely source for the *Prolegomena* are "the immediate surroundings of Olympiodorus and Elias" (1962), XLIX. Confusions between this text and Olympiodorus' commentary on the *Alcibiades*, particularly its life of Plato and other philosophical discrepancies, help refute Olympiodorus' authorship but does not discount it completely.

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employs this association to argue against skeptical readings of Platonic philosophy. Overall, the author asserts the superiority of Platonism amongst the schools as Plato was oriented to the true causes of the cosmos in contradistinction to the merely supplementary causes and as a consequence he believes that Plato's philosophy more than any other tends to the health of the human soul. After discussing these aspects of the *Prolegomena*'s reception of Plato, the final section of this study culminates in a detailed analysis of the author's hermeneutical strategies, beginning with its endorsement of the Iamblichean curriculum in divergence from other established reading orders, e.g. chronologies from the life of Socrates or Thrasyllan tetralogies. This will lead to the *Prolegomena*'s defense of the Neoplatonic trope (first explicitly instigated by Proclus) that identified the well-formed text with a literary microcosm,[3] and the author's corresponding strategies for discovering the aim or *skopos* of particular dialogues. In the end, the goal of the *Prolegomena* is quite simple: establish hermeneutical methods and procedures that will help students see the beauty and divinity in reading and commenting on Plato's dialogues.

II The Life of Plato

1) *Divine Kinship and Philosophical Superiority*

Throughout antiquity the biography of a philosopher was often thought to substantiate the virtue of the author in question. Such *bioi*, like Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* or Marinus' *Vita procli*, sought to establish the sage-like status of their subject as a means to authenticating the effectiveness of their philosophical system.[4] In the case of the *Prolegomena*'s depiction of Plato, the author stitches together a wide variety of charming anecdotes, omens and oracles to emphasize his divine kinship and Apollonian character.[5] Mistakenly identifying Plato with the Socratic marker, "fellow slave of the swans," the author adapts an epitaph from Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Plato* in which the similarity between Asclepius, son of Apollo, and Plato is underlined. Both men were

3 See Coulter (1976). See Westerink (2011), XXXII, where he argues that the *Prolegomena* is indebted to Proclus' now lost introduction to Plato referred to in his own commentary on the *Alcibiades I*. See *in Alc.* 10.3–14. Important points of contact between Proclus and the *Prolegomena* include the anonymous author's belief that dialogue form was analogous to the cosmos as well as the author's rules for unpacking the *skopos* of particular dialogues.

4 For more information on the importance of the *bioi* in ancient commentaries and class lectures see Mansfield (1994).

5 *Proleg.* 1.20. All translations of the *Prolegomena* are Westerink (2011).

divine healers, but one "of bodies, the other of souls."[6] Overall, our author's life of Plato advanced the idea that he was to be revered and venerated as a divine figure (as opposed to a god) for both his wisdom[7] and form of life (τὸ εἶδος τῆς ζωῆς), a form of life particularly characterized by purification from plurality.[8]

Continuing with the theme of purification, the *Prolegomena* introduces its readers to Plato's educational background by drawing a parallel between it and the pedagogical schema of the *Republic*, arguing that Plato came to believe in the purgative effects of reading, music and gymnastics through his own personal experiences.[9] From here Plato subsequently turned to the poets to learn style (χαρακτήρ) and diction (φράσις), even turning to mimes to perfect his budding art of imitation (μιμητικός) – "for writing dialogues means mimicking characters (ὁ γὰρ διαλόγους γράφων μίμησιν προσώπων εἰσάγει)."[10] The author of the *Prolegomena* ultimately argues that Plato surpassed the poets insofar as they spoke without proof (ἀπόδειξις), depending not on reason but on divine madness (μαίνομαι) and inspiration (ἐνθουσιάζω).[11]

With regard to Plato's initial philosophical influences, the *Prolegomena* primarily emphasizes Socrates (who will be discussed below) and the Pythagoreans, who called for Plato "to perfect himself in the science of numbers as

6 *Proleg.* 6.14–18. As also noted by Westerink, this is another example of the author's adaption which eliminates Plato's divine paternity. Cf. D.L. 3.45: "If Phoebus did not cause Plato to be born in Greece, how came it that he healed the minds of men by letters? As the god's son Asclepius is a healer of the body, so is Plato of the immortal soul. [...] Phoebus gave to mortals Asclepius and Plato, the one to save their souls, the other to save their bodies." Cf. Olymp. *in Alc.* 2.154–67. The author of the *Prolegomena* also offers Plato's birthdate which corresponds to the feast of Apollo (1.43) and his age of death at 81, an apparently Apollonian number based on calculations regarding the number of Muses and other symbolic mathematical properties (6.1–7). Moreover, Plato was also said to have saved Athens from a plague by solving a Delphic oracle that "enjoined them to double [Apollo's] altar." After several failed attempts by others to simply double "in the everyday sense," the *Prolegomena* makes an allusion to the *Meno* and narrates that Plato realized that the god was asking for "the mean proportional and to double it that way [...] when this had been done the plague ended immediately." *Proleg.* 5.15–24.

7 *Proleg.* 6.8–13. See also 6.18 where the Athenians are said to celebrate Plato's birthday with the song, "On this day the Gods gave Plato to mankind."

8 *Proleg.* 1.38–41.

9 *Proleg.* 2.33–35. Cf. Proclus, *in Alc.* 193.21–196.1 and Olymp., *in Alc,* 2.44.

10 *Proleg.* 3.12

11 See also *Proleg.* 7.18–33 for the author's criticism of the myths of the poets and his defense of Plato's censorship of them in *Rep.* Cf. Plato *Rep.* II 377a–383c. Interestingly, despite not being part of the Iamblichean curriculum, the *Prolegomena* consistently makes reference to *Rep.* even mentioning its *skopos* or aim as the ideal state (26.45).

expressing realities (τὸ δι' ἀριθμῶν τὰ πράγματα σημαίνειν)." So enamored by this school, the *Prolegomena* repeats the anecdote that Plato later traveled to study with Egyptian Pythagoreans and "returned with a full knowledge of geometry and the hieratic arts."[12] The *Prolegomena* also follows Diogenes Laertius and further mentions Plato's tutelage under Cratylus the Heraclitean as well as Hermippus, the Parmenidean.[13]

While indebted to these diverse Pre-Socratic philosophies, the *Prolegomena* spends a considerable amount of time arguing, in Aristotelian fashion, that Plato's forerunners failed to discover the absolute causes of the cosmos. Here, the *Prolegomena* appeals to the Neoplatonic distinction between six causes (as opposed to the Aristotelian four): 1) material, 2) formal, 3) instrumental, 4) efficient/productive, 5) paradigmatic and 6) final.[14] Dividing this list in two, Neoplatonists, like Proclus, claimed that matter, form and instrument are only *synaitiai* or subservient, supplemental causes to the productive, paradigmatic, and final causes.[15] These final three causes are the absolute or true causes insofar as they are not immanent to their effects but transcend them. As we shall see, this schema of the six causes will be influential for the *Prolegomena*'s analogy between a Platonic dialogue and the cosmos, but for now the author uses it to argue for Plato's superiority over all other philosophical worldviews. As the *Prolegomena* insists, "[W]hile [the Pre-Socratics] only recognized contributory

12 *Proleg*. 4.1–10. Cf. D.L. 3.6, Olymp., *in Alc*. 2. 89–92, 134–7 and *in Gorg*. 194.19–22.

13 *Proleg.* 8.4–14. Cf. D.L. 3.6.

14 Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 65, 4–16 and Galen *On Antecedent Causes* 6.63–64. For more information on these causes in Neoplatonism and Proclus see Siorvanes (1996), 88–91; Gerson (2005), 101–30; Tarrant (2007), 50, 94–95n.12 and Steel (2003), 181 and n.19, 21 and 22. Proclus constantly refers to this schema of causes throughout his work but notable references include *in Tim*. I 12.21, 143.19–22, 263.20 and *in Alc*., 168.21–169.2. Cf. Olymp. *in Gorg*., Proem 5.1–6.1.

15 Proclus, *In Tim*. I 2.1–8: "For physical inquiry, to put it briefly, is divided into three, one part busying itself with matter and material causes, the next including investigation of the form too and revealing that this is more properly a cause, and the third part demonstrating *that these do not even have the role of cause* (rather they play the role of supplementary requirements), postulating that the 'causes' in the strict sense of natural occurrences are different: *the productive, the paradigmatic, and the final*." (trans.) Runia and Share, emphasis in italics are my own. Cf. *In Tim*. I 2.30–3.4. To situate the three causes within late Neoplatonic ontology, the final cause is the One supreme principle while the paradigmatic resides at the primary level of the intelligible in the second hypostasis of Being. Finally, Proclus assigns the efficient cause, i.e. the demiurge, to the intellective sphere as he is that which contemplates, or looks to, the intelligible and is thus intellective (νοερός), which squares nicely with Plato's own classification of the demiurge with an intellect (νοῦς).

causes (συναίτια), Plato made a distinction and defined as the real causes the paradigmatic (παραδειγματικὸν), the productive (ποιητικὸν) and the final (τελικόν)."[16] Notably repeating Socrates' own criticisms in the *Phaedo*, the *Prolegomena* insists that Anaxagoras' νοῦς was not a true productive cause while the Ionians merely provide material causes.[17] Describing Plato's innovations in metaphysics, the *Prolegomena* emphasizes that Plato eventually exceeded the Pythagoreans (and Aristotelians) by distinguishing between productive and paradigmatic causes, associating the ideas with the latter type of cause.[18] As for Parmenides, the *Prolegomena* simply dismisses the Eleactic by appealing to the need for a final cause beyond being as all things strive for the Good, even at the detriment of existence.[19]

Concerning Plato's successors, the author of the *Prolegomena* believed that Plato bested the Stoics in wisdom insofar as he proved the existence of incorporeal realities and the immortality of the soul while also elevating the divine beyond the level of divisible bodies. Moreover, the *Prolegomena* asserts that Plato was the first to advance a notion of eternity distinct from time and was also the original author of the doctrine of providence. Due to this, the author of the *Prolegomena* regards Plato as presciently refuting the Epicurean position that everything happens by chance and material determinism.[20] As for the Peripatetics, Plato surpasses them, with the same dismissal of Eleatic philosophy, through his appeal to a final cause beyond intelligence.

2) *Socrates and Skepticism*

Turning to the *Prolegomena*'s treatment of Plato's relationship with Socrates, our author informs his readers that Plato became a student of Socrates at the age of twenty and studied ethics with him for ten years.[21] To emphasize the divine nature of Socrates' tutelage with Plato, the *Prolegomena* offers an exegesis of one of the snub-nosed philosopher's dreams:

16 *Proleg.* 8.3–5. Translation slightly adapted from Westerink.

17 *Proleg.* 8.5–8. Cf. Plato, *Phd.* 97b–99c and Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 984b15–19.

18 *Proleg.* 5.35–41. In other words, in our author's eyes Plato's ideas transcend the demiurgic mind or Aristotle's Intellect. Cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* VIII 5 257b9–10.

19 *Proleg.* 8.20–25. This criticism is repeated at 9.25–27 but is directed toward the Peripatetics.

20 *Proleg.* 9.1–23.

21 *Proleg.* 3.15. Cf. D.L. 3.6. The anonymous author also recounts the famous anecdote that once Plato came to the belief that Socrates was superior to all others, Plato threw his earlier work into a fire.

> *Proleg*. 1. 22–29
> … an unfledged swan came to sit in [Socrates'] lap, then grew wings and flew away, crying out with a loud, ringing call, so that all who heard it were spell-bound. Its meaning was that Plato, though immature when he came to [Socrates], would eventually reach perfection and be so eminent in his teaching that everybody would long to hear him and no one would be able or even try to resist.[22]

While often conflating Plato and Socrates, e.g. identifying Plato with disavowals of knowledge or midwifery,[23] the author also takes great strides to separate the two philosophers, emphasizing that the young Plato gave Socrates a "great deal of trouble."[24] In other words, from our author's vantage point, at no time was Plato ever a docile student merely echoing the views of his esteemed teacher. The *Prolegomena* rather stresses Plato's creativity and originality, utilizing various anecdotes to sketch a picture of a more complex relationship. For instance, the author finds it necessary to recite the spurious account of Socrates' response to the *Lysis*. As the *Prolegomena* rehearses, Socrates exclaimed: "This young man takes me wherever he likes and as far as he likes and makes me talk to whomever he likes."[25] Obviously the importance of this quote is not its historical accuracy. Rather, the anecdote's value derives from the fact that it demonstrates that the author of the *Prolegomena* would never have professed that an authentic Socratic philosophy was rehearsed in any of the dialogues. Instead, for the author of the *Prolegomena*, all the dialogues are products of a brilliantly creative and independently thoughtful student of Socrates.

A key issue regarding the Socratic character of Platonism for our author was its association with skepticism. Offering six arguments to dismiss this charge, the author explicitly connects the aporetic tendencies of Socrates to Plato's own pedagogical aims. First, the author responds to the inconclusive language

22 cf. Apuleius, *De Plat.* I 1, D.L. 3.5 and Olymp., *in Alc*. 2.83–86.

23 When attempting to outline the association of Plato with the god Apollo, 1.21 the anonym identifies Socrates' self-identification with being a "fellow-servant of the swans" in *Phd.* 85b with Plato. The anonymous author often venerates the importance of Socrates for Platonic philosophy indicating the former's priority even when mentioning their respective birthdays. "[Plato] was born on Thargelion 7th, on which day the isle of Delos celebrates the feast of Apollo; the 6th of the month was the birthday of Socrates, when they used to celebrate the birthday feast of Artemis. This indicates the priority of Socrates both as regards time and as regards insight." I 40–46

24 *Proleg.* 3.25. Cf. D.L. 3.35.

25 *Proleg.* 3.25–30. Cf. D.L. 3.35.

of the dialogues, once again mistakenly identifying Plato with Socrates: "… [T]hey say, he uses certain adverbs expressive of doubt and hesitation when discussing objective facts, such as 'probably' and 'maybe' and 'perhaps, I think'."[26] Here the *Prolegomena* draws on Proclus' defense of Socrates' use of "I think." For Proclus and the author of the *Prolegomena*, this inconclusive language indicates the easily changing nature of the objects of opinion, which is appropriate for teaching the youth to moderate their use of dogmatic language in relation to the exterior world of becoming.[27]

The second argument centers on Plato's penchant for asserting contradictory conclusions on the same subject in particular dialogues, e.g. friendship in the *Lysis* or temperance in the *Charmides*. The *Prolegomena* succinctly states that while allowing conflicting views to emerge, Plato implicitly advances a "true solution."[28] Put otherwise, it seems as if readers of Plato are expected to do the work of interpretation, harmonizing the conclusions of these seemingly incompatible works via insight into the overall system of Plato. Third, noting Socrates repeated destruction of every definition of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*, our author asks, "How can one maintain that a man with these views believes in knowledge?"[29] In response the *Prolegomena* gestures to the Neoplatonic adaption of Plato's theory of mimesis, emphasizing that knowledge is not something that comes from without or from sensible experience. To the contrary, the soul, once purified from externally motivated tendencies, discovers the essential reasoning principles lying in the depths of one's soul, orienting one's being and good, therein allowing for a type of knowledge that comes from turning to oneself and the soul.[30] Drawing from this, the fourth argument focuses on how some believe that all forms of knowledge, both sensible and intelligible, "go astray." The author concedes to the imaginary interlocutor that sensible knowledge remains inconclusive, because it does not contemplate the being or reality of things. Ultimately, our Platonist author believes that intelligible knowledge will prove impossible for those who "are bound up with matter, whose souls are subject to the body." The *Prolegomena* asserts that intelligible knowledge is reserved for those who have been purified.[31]

26 *Proleg*. 10.8.

27 Proclus *In Alc*. 22.15–23.8. *Cf. in Alc*. 22.10 and 24.10. See another similar example of Proclus' exegesis of Socrates' conjectural statements at *in Alc*. 93. 7–8 and 95.25–97.3.

28 *Proleg.* 10.15.

29 *Proleg.* 10.19. Cf. Plato *Tht*. 147d–148b.

30 *Proleg.* 10.20–26. Cf. Proclus, *in Alc*. 171.1–5.

31 *Proleg.*10.26–43.

The fifth and sixth arguments concerning a skeptical interpretation of Plato hinges on Socrates' disavowals of knowledge and teaching. Keeping in mind that the author of the *Prolegomena* explicitly identifies Plato, not Socrates, with personally asserting, "I know nothing and I teach nothing, I only wonder,"[32] the author argues that Plato is comparing his paltry knowledge to divine knowledge or, as Socrates' insists in the *Apology* (33b), human knowledge is of little or no value.[33] Concerning the Socratic disavowal of teaching, the *Prolegomena* appeals to Socrates' maieutic abilities, emphasizing that Plato does not in fact teach but merely awakens us to self-knowledge.[34] Here the author fully collapses Plato with Socrates and concludes that Plato's knowledge is identical to the three Socratic arts: 1) dialectic, 2) love and 3) midwifery.[35] Overall, in this identification of the character of Socrates with Plato, the author evidences that Platonism is in some sense Socratic insofar as it is concerned with an internal wisdom rooted in the love of beauty and the Good.

III Writing and Dialogue Form

Before treating *Prolegomena*'s hermeneutics it should be emphasized that despite its fragmentary nature there is a unity to the *Prolegomena*, namely, the prelude or the life of Plato foreshadows the main themes at the heart of the text, underscoring Plato's divinity, wisdom and advancement of the underlying

32 *Proleg.* 10.44–45.

33 *Proleg.* 10.50. Cf. *Ap.* 23a–b. Ultimately the author asserts that divine knowledge is not merely transcendent but rather, "… that knowledge is different from our: ours is knowledge and nothing else, God's is effective; it apprehends by simple intuition, while ours depends on causes and premises."

34 Note here, that at *Proleg.* 5.25 the author also asserts that Plato, not Socrates, was the first not to charge a fee for teaching.

35 *Proleg.* 11.1–13: "Besides, when [Plato] says 'I know nothing,' he adds 'except one small thing, namely giving my own account of things and asking others for theirs', that is to say, the art of dialectic. In another passage he declares that he knows the art of love, and, somewhere else again, that of delivery. Through these three we find him glorifying the Godhead in the *Phaedrus*, where he calls it good, beautiful and wise. For, in the same way as dialectic pervades all the sciences, so do all things aspire to the Good, and therefore he parallels the Good with dialectic; the art of love is in the sphere of beauty, since what we love is the Beautiful; and Wisdom corresponds with midwifery, for as the wise man's task is to reveal what is hidden in the depths of the soul and to bring to light the fruit of her travail, so it is also the object of midwifery to bring to light the child that was hidden in the womb."

causes of the cosmos. On the basis of these three tropes the author's hermeneutics allow him to regard the dialogues as an uncovering of the divine causes that assist readers in tending to the health of their souls.

1) *The Underlying Cause of Writing and the Unwritten Doctrines*

One of the dominant questions that the *Prolegomena* investigates is why Plato felt it necessary to commit his teaching to writing at all? Emphasizing the themes of the *Phaedrus* that written works cannot defend themselves, the *Prolegomena* concludes that Plato's intention was not to be a writer *per se*. Plato's primary goal was to be a teacher whose work is so persuasive and inspiring that it would create pupils "who are living books."[36] Believing this living legacy was established by philosophers like Socrates and Pythagoras, the author of the *Prolegomena* emphasizes that Plato advanced unwritten doctrines which, above and beyond the written dialogues, disseminated his more ethereal and, thus, more easily misunderstood tenets. The author of the *Prolegomena* ultimately compares Plato's unwritten doctrines to the imperceptibility of the true causes of the cosmos.

> *Proleg*. 13.18–23
> [...] so Plato too has handed on some of his ideas in writing and some by word of mouth, like incorporeal entities, imperceptible to the senses, namely what he said in his lectures. It is a known fact that Aristotle has written about Plato's oral discourses. Therefore, to show his friendship with god even in this detail, he endeavored to imitate him, as friends will imitate each other.

Two things are worth noting in this quote. First, the author confirms the Neoplatonic validation of the unwritten doctrines of Plato. Second, the author continues the practice he began in the life of Plato, i.e. establishing Plato's divine kinship by highlighting his likeness to the gods, particularly the Demiurge in his activities of creation. It is due to this kinship between the divine and Plato that the author ultimately appeals to the underlying good of Plato's choice to write at all.

2) *Taxis*

With respect to the order of Plato's dialogues the *Prolegomena* articulates three possible series: (1) the chronology of the author, (2) the chronology of the

36 *Proleg.* 13.8–9.

character of Socrates and (3) the Iamblichean curriculum, which focuses on the psychogogic ascent of the human soul. Prioritizing (3), he begins by justifying the other two forms of chronology, outlining that under (1) the *Phaedrus* would come first as in this text Plato questions the activity of writing itself.[37] Here our author repeats the Platonic worry that written texts could pervert live teaching, exposing one's philosophy to misunderstandings and criticisms to which a text can never respond. The author also adds that the *Phaedrus* is highly poetic, thus harkening to Plato's time as a literary author. With regard to (2), chronology according to the point of view of the main protagonist, the *Prolegomena* offers no substantial comments, merely emphasizing that this order would begin with the *Parmenides* and end with the *Theaetetus*. Digressing momentarily before moving to (3), the author raises the possibility of a tertralogical order but immediately dismisses it. To the author's mind, Plato would then be mimicking not the divine but the poets who create images of images.[38] Furthermore, even though some groupings like the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito* and the *Phaedo* appear to belong in a kind of tetralogical arrangement, each dialogue has a radically different aim or *skopos*. As we shall discuss later, the *skopos* is the overall problem of the text and as these texts do not aim at the same end, they cannot be reconciled as necessarily belonging together.

In the end, our author expectedly champions the Iamblichean curriculum that begins with the *Alcibiades I,* whose *skopos* turns on the issue of self-knowledge, and ends with the *Philebus*, whose *skopos* is the Good. The remaining ten dialogues are arranged according to the scale of Neoplatonic virtues, i.e. natural, ethical, social, cathartic and contemplative,[39] culminating in the reading of the two perfect dialogues, the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*. Below is a chart outlining these features in the *Prolegomena*.[40]

37 *Proleg*. 24.1–29.

38 We should also keep in mind that the history of dismissing the tertralogical order of reading Plato was already well established by the time this author was composing his introduction to Platonic philosophy. See Albinus, *Prologos* ch.4.

39 Olymp. *in Phd.* 8.2.1–20; Damasc. *in Phd.* 1.138. Damascius' adds the theurgic or paradigmatic virtues at *in Phd.* 8.2.1–20.

40 The following is a chart that hopes to elucidate the Iamblichean curriculum as the author of the *Prolegomena* interprets it. It does not take into account Proclus, Olympiodorus or Damascius' identifications of the virtues or aims but only states, with noted exceptions, what is explicitly mentioned in the *Prolegomena*. For similar charts see Westerink (1962/2011) XL, Jackson, Lycos, and Tarrant. (1998), 13–14 and Griffin (2014a). Where sections are blank the virtue was either unclear or unnamed. It further identifies the author's explicit identification of a particular *skopos* for each text, a topic which will be explored in more detail in the following section.

TABLE 29.1 *Platonic dialogues and the corresponding virtue and* skopos

Iamblichean Curriculum	***Virtue***	***Skopos* (*Aim*)**	
1. *Alcibiades I*		*Self-Knowledge* (26.19) *Expose Ambition in All Readers* (23.23)	
2. *Gorgias*	*Constitutional*	*Principles of Happiness* (22.9) *True Rhetoric* (22.34)	
3. *Phaedo*	*Cathartic*	*The Soul* (21.9)[41]	
4. *Cratylus*		*Knowledge Of Reality* (26.27)	*Names* (26.30)
5. *Theaetetus*			*Things* (26.31)
6. *Sophist*		*Not-Being* (21.32)	
7. *Statesman*		*Natural Philosophy* (26.32)[42]	
8. *Phaedrus*	*Contemplative*	*Universal Beauty* (22.5) *Theological* (26.33)	
9. *Symposium*	*Contemplative*	*Theological* (26.33)	
10. *Philebus*		*Six Phases of the Good* (23.6 and 26.21)	
Perfect Dialogues			
Timaeus		*Platonic Physics* (22.29 and 26.16)	
Parmenides		*Theological* (26.16)	

While the author's understanding of the ascent of the soul through these particular dialogues and their corresponding virtue is incomplete, it is clear that the *Prolegomena* advocates that this arrangement promotes the readers' ascent and good through the realization of the particular *skopos* of each dialogue.

3) *The Dialogue as a Microcosm*

The insistence on a reading order oriented toward the health of the human soul helps the author of the *Prolegomena* to defend why Plato chose to write

41 The *skopos* of this text is not explicitly named. Rather, the author refutes the thesis that it has three themes as others have supposed, e.g. the immortality of the soul, the death of the wise and the philosophical life. I venture to make this estimated guess as in the passage referenced above he is referring to the aptness of the double titles of texts like the *Phd.* or On Soul and as one of his rules for discerning the *skopos* is that it cannot be the individual, then one may conclude that the second title is more apt to be the *skopos*. This is further confirmed at 22.5 when the author says that the *Phaedrus' skopos* is true beauty and as Beauty was the second title, explicitly mentioned by the author, then it seems he may have thought the same of the *Phd.*

42 This is the characterization of some unnamed dialogue but the text picks up right after a lucana which rejoins exegesis at a point that seems to refer to the *Statesman*. As such it seems logical to assign this *skopos*. Nevertheless, this cannot be the exact *skopos* that he demands of a proper *skopos* in 22.21,

dialogues. Indeed, the author begins with the observation that the dialogues themselves depict a variety of characters in a transformative and purgative process, converting characters from existences riddled in contradiction and villainy to lives blessed with knowledge and virtue. From this vantage point the *Prolegomena* advances no less than seven additional arguments for why Plato utilized this particular medium.[43] First, the dialogue best resembles the cosmos. As the cosmos has various parts, e.g. matter, form and soul, while still being a unity, the dialogue also possesses a diversity of natures and characters while still remaining a unity. Second, the cosmos is a kind of dialogue itself filled with superior and inferior elements that compete and coalesce for the sake of the Good. This is comparable to a dialogue, as a dialogue has good and bad characters that are either questioned or question for the sake of some particular aim, i.e. for the sake of some good.[44] Third, the literary work is comparable to a living being and as such the best literary work will resemble the most beautiful living being (the World-Soul or the Intelligible Living Being from Plato's *Timaeus*). Consequently, since dialogue form contains all the analogues or causes as the cosmos, it is the best literary form. Fourth, human beings naturally like stories and all other forms of imitation. Since the dialogue imitates the cosmos it is the best kind of imitation; it is the best story. Fifth, Plato recognized that to teach people he could not present philosophical ideas divorced from their connection to real people and real life. Discussing justice in the abstract compels nobody to be just. Sixth, dialogue form showcases the virtue and positive results of dialectical discussion and the discovery of latent knowledge in the depths of our souls. Seventh, a variety of speakers help audiences to pay attention to and internalize the problem at stake.[45]

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43 *Proleg.* 15.1–50. The following list can also be found in Layne (2014).

44 Cf. *Proleg.* 14.8–22 where he emphasizes that Plato uses diverse characters in a wholly different way than tragedians. Unlike the authors of tragedy who use various characters, i.e. both heroes and villains, simply for the purpose of entertainment, Plato, like the maker of the cosmos, uses a diversity of characters (or elements) for the sake of the Good and as such the villains, or the bad, are purified from their baseness, in much the same way as all parts of the cosmos from the highest to the lowest return to the Good. See also Olymp. *in Gorg.,* 0.1 as well as Coulter (1976), 77–94 for the discussion of the concept of literary unity and its connection to the divine making of the Demiurge.

45 *Proleg.* 15.46–50: "Alcibiades, indeed, was so stirred by Socrates' talks that he said of himself: 'Socrates when I listen to you, my heart pounds as if I were in a trance, and tears spring to my eyes.' For when they get hold of a man so gifted by nature, they hold on to him and are as difficult to shake off as an angry viper. For all these reasons he chose the dialogue as his medium."

Overall, these seven arguments pivot on two central ideas. First, the author repeatedly underlines the mimetic value of imitating not only the characters who are transformed or converted to better ways of life but also the need to mimic or internalize the virtue(s) at stake in the text. Second, the dialogues themselves are living beings insofar as they mirror the living cosmos in all its parts and causes. Synthesizing the arguments for the dialogue's analogy to the cosmos and the author's pedagogical defense for why Plato wrote dialogues, we should note that the concern for the mimetic value of the dialogues evidences how the dialogue as a living being is both an effect of the cosmos but also a cause itself. As a good effect or imitation of the cosmos, dialogues will be living and therein cause others to mimic or internalize the virtue(s) at stake in the text. As the cosmos is in harmony, so too the text that is mindful of and intentionally mirrors such cosmic harmony. This order/harmony in the text in turn pushes the reader of a text to recognize, as the astronomer sees the harmony of the orbits of the stars, the value of the true and divine causes of the text, a recognition that can inspire one to become both like the author of the text but also and ultimately like the author of the cosmos, leading therein to a cascading sympathy between divine and living beings. In other words, the living nature of the cosmos breathes life into Plato's dialogues which in turn awakens readers to their own true causes, therein inviting readers to to become like the divine or "friends" of the divine. Invoking Proclus' commentary on the *Alcibiades* and his own identification of the dialogue with a living microcosm,[46] the *Prolegomena* stresses the analogy between the parts of a dialogue and the causes of the cosmos:

46 The analogy of the dialogue to the cosmos is most explicitly and famously drawn by Proclus at *in Alc.* 10.6–15: Let it then be stated that in this work proportionate (ἀναλογεῖν) to the Good (τῷ ἀγαθῷ) is conformity to the divine through care of ourselves (τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἐπιμελείας), to the Intellect (τῷ νῷ) the knowledge of ourselves, to the Soul (τῇ ψυχῇ) the wealth of demonstration (τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀποδείξεων) leading to this conclusion, and practically the whole syllogistic part of the dialogue (πᾶν ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸ συλλογιστικὸν τοῦ διαλόγου); for the Form (τῷ εἴδει) there remains the style of diction and the interweaving figures of speech, and of the literary forms, and what else belongs to stylistic ability (ὁ χαρακτὴρ τῆς λέξεως καὶ τῶν σχημάτων καὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν ἡ πλοκὴ καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τῆς λεκτικῆς ἐστὶ δυνάμεως); and for the matter (τῇ ὕλῃ) the persons and the time and what is called by some the plot (τὰ πρόσωπα καὶ ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἡ καλουμένη παρά τισιν ὑπόθεσις). See also *in Alc.* 10.5–7. To be sure, Westerink (1967/2011) and Mansfeld argue quite convincingly for the fact that Proclus now lost introduction constitute the outline of the 10 (11 counting the bios) isagogic issues addressed by the Prolegomena. See, of course, Coulter (1976), 95–103 for the groundbreaking history of identifying literature with a living thing or with a microcosm that resembles the macrocosm created by the Demiurge.

> *Proleg.* 17.33–39
> There is also another way to show the constituents of the universe analogous (ἀναλογοῦσι) to the elements of the dialogue since there are six kinds of causes acting on everything in creation: the material (ὑλικοῦ), the formal (εἰδικοῦ), the productive (ποιητικοῦ), the final (τελικοῦ), the exemplary (παραδειγματικοῦ) and the instrumental (ὀργανικοῦ) cause, the analogues of the material cause are the characters and the time and the place (τὰ πρόσωπα καὶ ὁ χρόνος καὶ ὁ τόπος), of the formal cause the style (ὁ χαρακτήρ), of the efficient cause the soul (ἡ ψυχή), of the instrumental cause the arguments (αἱ ἀποδείξεις), of the paradigmatic cause the problems (τὰ προβλήματα), of the final cause the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν) of the dialogue.

The analogy between the parts/causes of the cosmos and the elements of a dialogue is depicted in the following chart.

TABLE 29.2 *The causes of the cosmos and the elements of Platonic dialogues*

The Microcosmic Analogy			
Cosmos	**Dialogue**		
Matter or Material Cause	Characters	a) True Knowledge	
		b) Correct Opinion	
		c) Ignorance	i) Simple
			ii) Double
			iii) Supreme
			iv) Sophisticated
	Time	Festivals and Holy days	
	Setting	a) Inside Athens	
		b) Outside Athens	
Form or Formal Cause	Style	a) Powerful/Theological	
		b) Plain/Logical	
		c) Intermediate	i) Mixed/Ethical
			ii) Juxtaposition
Nature or Instrumental Cause	Method of Procedure	a) Expository	i) Theoretical
			ii) Political
		b) Investigatory	i) Agonistic
			ii) Gymnastic
Soul or Productive Cause	Overt Arguments		
Intellect or Paradigmatic Cause	*Skopos*, Theme or Problem		
Good or Final Cause	The Achievement of the *Skopos* in the Reader		

The matter of the dialogue is constituted by the characters, time and setting, e.g. the basic literary elements of Plato's work.[47] The *Prolegomena* privileges the role of the characters, given that "there can be no dialogue at all without characters."[48] Interestingly, the author classifies three main types of characters: a) those who enjoy true knowledge, b) those who hold correct opinions and c) those who possess a particular form of ignorance. The final category of ignorance is additionally divided into i) simple, ii) double, iii) supreme and iv) sophisticated.[49] Strikingly, the *Prolegomena* confuses the originally Procline distinction between simple and double ignorance: if one knows that one does not know, one retains a kind of wisdom (or simple ignorance) and double ignorance, often associated with haughty youths like Alcibiades or sophists, is not knowing that one doe not know. The confusion is easily seen in the *Prolegomena*'s strange identification of Socrates with double ignorance as opposed to a man of wisdom (as Proclus classified), or a man of simple ignorance as both the *Apology* and the *Phaedrus* might indicate.[50] Intriguingly, the *Prolegomena* accentuates the idea that Plato's characters are not completely historical, finding it outlandish that Plato would be a mere transcriber of historical events or personages. For our author, Plato's characters, like colors in painting, are blends of history and fiction, exhibiting, therein, the lived portrait

47 I have dealt with the philosophical implications of these aspects of Neoplatonic hermeneutics in Layne (2014).

48 This is often referred to as the *dramatis personae*. See Mansfeld (1994), n.7 and n.42 for the history of interpreting from "the characters" of the dialogue in both Christian and pagan contexts. As we shall see below the *Prolegomena* will consider the *dramatis personae* relevant as once of the material causes of the dialogue but it, in the author's view, cannot be the focus of the *skopos* or intellect of the text.

49 *Proleg.* 16. 19–29: "Simple ignorance occurs when a man does not know a particular thing and knows that he does not know; double ignorance when he does not know a thing and is aware that he does not know, as Socrates is when he says in the *Phaedrus*: I am as yet unable, as the Delphic inscription advises us, to know myself'; supreme ignorance is when a man does not know and knows that he does not know, but owing to the emotional appeal of the opposite belief refuses to give up his ignorance; sophistical ignorance is when a man does not know, but attempts to disguise his ignorance by specious reasoning."

50 See also Proclus *In Alc.* 201.5–8: "Either we do know or we don't and if we don't know, either we think we do or we don't. If we do know we possess knowledge; if we neither know nor think we do, simple ignorance; but if we don't and think we do, we are doubly ignorant." See also Olymp. *in Alc.* 11.9–10 and *in Phd.* 2.11 who conforms, as Westerink notes (XLIX), to the usual distinction between simple and double ignorance. For Socrates identification with a man of wisdom in Proclus and for more information on double ignorance see Layne (2018).

of philosophy herself.[51] As for the two other material causes, the *Prolegomena* echoes Proclus, arguing that the times of the dialogues were not left to chance but "offered up as hymns" at festivals and holy days.[52] Finally, the settings varied but could be roughly divided between dialogues set inside or outside Athens as well as those prior to Socrates' death and those after his execution, in which "the Athenians were no longer worthy to appear in his work."[53]

Moving to the formal cause of the dialogue, the author of the *Prolegomena* identifies this with the style or χαρακτήρ of the dialogue, acknowledging that Plato tailors the style of the dialogue to fit the subject. The pertinent question here is whether the dialogue is a) powerful (ἢ ἁδρὸς), b) plain (ἢ ἰσχνὸς) or c) intermediate.[54] Arguing that Plato reserves the powerful style for theological texts and the plain for logical texts, the author reserves the intermediate for dialogues that are i) mixed in their variety, i.e. the dialogue as a whole exhibits a balance of powerful and plain, or ii) juxtaposition, where parts of the text are powerful and other parts plain. The author cites the *Gorgias* as powerful in its exposition of the eschatological myth while that which precedes the myth is plain.

51 *Proleg.* 16.27–34. More stunning for eyes unfamiliar with the Neoplatonic penchant for harmonizing everything in the Platonic dialogues with the orders of reality, the author of the Prolegomena rehearses Proclus' argument that the conversations between characters parallels the order of the universe. *Proleg.* 20.10–15: "We find, then, that Plato makes the conversation take place either by the mouth of the personages themselves, when, for example he introduces Socrates or somebody else talking directly; or through other people who are among the audience of the debaters, when he represents somebody else as reporting the things he heard Socrates say; or again through other people who have been told by those who heard Socrates himself; or finally, through others who heard it from those second-hand hearers; the succession of hearers goes as far as this, but no farther. In this respect, too, we can see Plato imitating the order of the universe which goes no further than the third degree."

52 *Proleg.* 16.37. In his commentary on the *Parmenides* Proclus observes the dramatic date of the conversation between Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates – the Greater Panathenaea. In this context, Proclus connects this date to his understanding of *Tim.* that takes place during the Lesser Panathenaea. See also Van den Berg (2001), 23–26, who contends that Proclus would have regarded both these dialogues as hymns written by Plato in honor of the "One and all the gods of the occasion of the Great Panathenaea." See also Olymp. *in Gorg.* Proem 3.1–10. See also Mansfeld (1994), 61 n.106, where he notes this parallel in Thrasyllus' tertralogical arrangement.

53 *Proleg.* 16.44–45.

54 Notably, when Proclus speaks of the χαρακτήρ of *Tim.* he describes it as a blend of the Socratic and Pythagorean. With this in mind, we can question how this would map onto the Prolegomena's understanding of plain or powerful types or if there were subgenre's like the Socratic or Pythagorean within these overarching styles.

Interestingly, the author argues that the mixed and intermediate styles were reserved for the ethical dialogues as "they treat of virtue, and virtue is a mean."[55]

As for the nature or instrumental cause of the dialogue, the *Prolegomena* argues that this is the procedure of the text, i.e. the method of exposition. Here, the author notes a difference between dialogues which are either i) expository or ii) investigatory, where expository texts tend to be theoretical or political in nature while the investigatory are often either i) agonistic, i.e. directed toward sophists, or ii) gymnastic, i.e. focused on the training of the young.[56] The *Prolegomena* ultimately lists fifteen methods of instruction that would apply to these two overarching methods: 1) inspired prophecy, 2) demonstration, 3) definition, 4) division, 5) analysis, 6) indirect evidence, 7) through images (τῷ εἰκονικῷ), 8) through models or *paradigms* (τῷ παραδειγματικῷ), 9) induction, 10) analogy, 11) arithmetic, 12) abstraction, 13) addition, 14) history and 15) etymology.[57] Bypassing common Platonic methods, e.g. demonstration, definition, division and analysis, as these are not controversial Platonic tools, we should note that the author's list includes inspired prophecy (in which the author refers to the *Phaedrus* and the demiurgic address in the *Timaeus*), metaphor (in which the author applauds Plato's image of the charioteer) and paradigms (in which the author notes Socrates' ship of state in the *Republic*).[58]

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55 *Proleg.* 17.14–15. Cf. Aristotle, *EN* 1106b27. See also Dillon (1987), 4, who makes use of this distinction in his exegesis on Proclus's *in Parm.* and its connection with the "plain" or unadorned style.

56 Strikingly, Proclus does not unpack the nature of the text but seems to conflate the form/style and the nature/method in his passages on Neoplatonic hermeneutics. Nevertheless, it may be interesting to note that the anonymous author may still be relying on a Procline source for dividing between agonistic and gymnastic methods as Proclus in his commentary on Plato's *Parm.* makes this distinction when he is talking about the difference between forms of dialectic. Here, he makes a distinction between "arguing on both sides" which is described as an exercise or gymnastics that trains "the eye of the soul for seeing its objects and for taking possession of its essential ideas by confronting them with their contradictories." In contrast, the second method is the highest form of dialectical activity and aims at unfolding the whole intelligible world, from one Form to another until it contemplates the primary Form. Proclus defines this dialectic as expounding the truth. Finally, the third method is necessary refutation or the elenchos which purifies men from "double ignorance." One can easily imagine that this third type would conform to the nature of a text which would be agonistic versus a gymnastic or training characteristic of arguing on both sides while the method of expounding the truth would clearly be the expository style of dialogue. See Proclus, *in Parm.* 654.16 and 653.2–654.14.

57 *Proleg.* 27.1–65.

58 Notably, the difference between an *eikon* and a *paradigm* is that the former is more accurate at expressing an identity while the paradigm expresses similarity in which one term is like the other but not vice versa.

In these and other methods like analogy, history and, even etymology, we should appreciate the *Prolegomena*'s valorization of Plato's literary methods, recognizing in the dialogues Plato's fondness for myth and allegory as part and parcel of the procedures for proper philosophical endeavor.

Moreover it is in this context of the instrumental cause that we can better understand, the *Prolegomena*'s treatment of skeptical interpretations of Plato and how the author's defense is intimately tied to whether dialogues in the investigatory mode are agonistic or gymnastic. To explain, we can recall that during his defense against a skeptical Plato, the author offers arguments that defend the aporetic tendencies of Socrates so as to highlight Plato's own psychogogic aims. In doing so the author was already gesturing to the importance of an "instrumental" cause in Plato's own dialogues insofar as readers need to carefully discern what instrument is being used in the text. For example in the first argument against a skeptical Plato, the author responds to Socrates' inconclusive language[59] by appealing to Proclus solution that such inconclusive language indicates the easily changing nature of the objects of opinion, which is appropriate for teaching the youth to moderate their use of dogmatic language in relation to the exterior world of becoming.[60] In this defense, the anonymous author is concerned to show the pedagogical value of tentative language used specifically in reference to teaching or instructing students. Put otherwise, such tentative language is the instrument being used so as to train or exercise both the characters in the dialogue as well as readers of the dialogue. Similarly, Plato's penchant for asserting contradictory conclusions on the same subject in particular dialogues, e.g. friendship in the *Lysis* or temperance in the *Charmides*, is also better understood by reflecting on the instrumental cause and the value of gymnastics for students. Here we should note a parallel with Proclus' commentary on the *Parmenides*, where Proclus clearly associates the *Lysis* with offering a kind of "gymnastics" which prepares students for philosophical study. As Tarrant has recently noted, Proclus is "preserving the reasons why the New Academy, and perhaps Arcesilaus in particular, had seen the *Lysis* as a Platonic paradigm of arguing for opposite theses." Ultimately, the *Prolegomena* does not utilize Proclus' solution to this debate, e.g. that the methods of *Lysis* are a kind of gymnastic but, rather, states that while allowing conflicting views to emerge, Plato implicitly advances a "true solution."[61] Nevertheless,

59 *Proleg.* 10.8.

60 Proclus, *In Alc.* 22.15–23.8. Cf. *in Alc.* 22.10 and 24.10. See another similar example of Proclus' exegesis of Socrates' conjectural statements at *in Alc.* 93.7–8 and 95.25–97.3.

61 *Proleg.* 10.15.

this characterization of kinds of dialogues where some are directed at sophists versus students is preserved in the distinction between agonistic versus gymnastic natures to a text. In other words, for the anonymous author readers must acquire a hermeneutic or method that allows one to see the "instruments" Plato's dialogues are utilizing to bring together disparate and sometimes conflicting ideas to a harmony. In the end, knowledge of the instrumental cause of the dialogue, i.e. the "method of procedure" determines whether a dialogue is expository, investigatory or agonistic, clarifies why Plato can appear to be a skeptic or contradictory in dialogues like the *Lysis* or the *Charmides*. There is, in the end, a method to his madness, he is using such methods of arguing on both sides to prepare his students. Yet as the author of the *Prolegomena* later reminds when he explicitly outlines the rules for discerning the intellect of the text or *skopos* (as we shall discuss in a moment), the intellect or meaning or "true solution" is not the text's nature, i.e. its method of procedure. In other words, just because the nature of the text appears to lead to aporia does not mean that the intellect of the text is confused.

As for the soul of the dialogue or its productive cause, i.e. the dialogue's first "absolute/true" cause as opposed to "supplemental cause" like the instrument, form or matter, the author only appeals to the idea that the soul of the text can be found in the overt arguments as the arguments animate or bring life to the matter at hand. In this explanation the author unfortunately does not discuss whether the arguments reflect a certain kind of soul and/or whether or not that soul is found in the letter of the arguments or if it can only be found in what is directing/animating the arguments.[62] Nevertheless, this lack is quickly redeemed by the detailed account of the *skopos* of the dialogue or the paradigmatic cause of the cosmos. Overall, the paradigmatic cause of a Platonic dialogue is the problem of the text "comparable to intelligence", around which the entire text circulates.[63] For the author all the parts of the dialogue, from characters to the style to the arguments, jointly reveal the overall *skopos* that assists readers in transforming their lives. Due to the significance of the *skopos,* then, the *Prolegomena* offers the only extended

62 For more information on the soul of the dialogue see Proclus *in Parm.* 645.10–646.33 and *in Tim.* I 7.18–8.13. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that Proclus conflates the nature and the soul of the dialogue and doesn't clearly separate between the arguments and the style of their presentation, i.e. the cause of animation and the tools by which the dialogue is animated.

63 *Proleg.* 17. 26–30.

set of rules for discerning the *skopos* in existing Neoplatonic manuscripts.[64] The rules are as follows:

1. The *skopos* of each dialogue can have only one theme, as all living beings have a singular purpose directed toward the Good. As such the *Prolegomena* dismisses theories about particular dialogues in which it is argued that there are several themes. He primarily notes the *Phaedo,* as some have maintained that it contained a variety of aims, e.g. proving the immortality of the soul as well as the virtue of the philosophical life.
2. The *skopos* of the dialogue should be general and not particular. He cites the *Sophist,* arguing that the theme cannot be the particular category of the sophist but the universal concept of not-being.
3. The *skopos* of the dialogue cannot be discerned in only part of the work, e.g. one myth or one particular refutation. The *skopos* needs to be evident throughout the entirety of the work, from the myths to the explicit arguments.
4. The *skopos* of the dialogue should be exact and not approximate. The author does not give much direction for this mandate but only the vague example concerning the *Timaeus*, i.e. the *skopos* is not physics but Platonic physics.
5. The *skopos* of the dialogue should concern the higher versus the lower, i.e. when the choice is between something like a) criticizing the rhetoric of Polus and Gorgias versus b) the elucidation of true rhetoric exhibited by Socrates, then the latter is shown only by means of the former.
6. The *skopos* of the dialogue must agree with the contents. As such, interpretations of dialogues that are not immediately in conjunction with the matter, form, nature and soul, i.e. the characters, style, methods and arguments of the text should be discarded as imaginative. Citing the example of those who might wish to read the *Gorgias* as having something to do with the hypostasis of Intellect,[65] the author insists

64 Westerink (xxxvi) notes that Proclus in his introduction to the *Republic* mentions a set of rules but does not specify them. He catalogues several instances in which Proclus mentions particular rules, including that the *skopos* should cover the whole of a dialogue versus a part or that it should concern actual content, nor derived from the methods of procedure (the nature). See *in Remp.*, 22.1–20, 22.42–46 and 23.7–9; *in Parm.* 631.1–4 and 637.4–16; *in Alc.* 8.1–3. According to Westerink the primary rule regarding the unity of the theme derives from Iamblichus as recorded by Elias (131.10–13).

65 Cf. Olymp., *in Gorg.* 0.4, 3.14–17.

that such a reading would be in "complete disagreement with the doctrines propounded in that dialogue."

7. The *skopos* of the dialogue cannot be negative or slanderous, i.e. finding fault in others for its own sake, as this would be unbecoming of Plato. Here the *Prolegomena* is already showing that the early dialogues did not simply criticize the poets, politicians or doubly ignorant for no reason; refutation always has some aim.
8. The *skopos* of the dialogue cannot be affective. In other words, the aim is never to elucidate feelings or emotions. As such the *Philebus* cannot be about pleasure but the Good.
9. The *skopos* of the dialogue cannot be instrumental, as "the *skopos* is not a means to an end but the end itself." This rule stipulates that the methods of demonstration, i.e. elenchus versus dialectic, are not themselves the end of dialogues but rather they are the means to revealing some other good.
10. Finally, the *skopos* of a dialogue cannot be reduced to the matter of the text, e.g. the characters, time or setting. As such neither the primary titles of dialogues nor the characters subject to Socrates' refutation are the aim. In other words, the theme of the *Alcibiades* is not simply to elucidate Socrates' and Alcibiades' relationship or, even, to expose this particular youth's unwitting double ignorance. Such a *skopos* would not only violate this rule but also (2) and (7). Overall, the author believes that, "It is better to say that [the *Alcibiades*'] aim is to expose the ambition that lives in everyone of us. In each of us there lives the ambition of an Alcibiades, which we must discipline and train for something better."

In summary, the *Prolegomena* aims to reveal the importance of properly interpreting Plato's dialogues so as assist students toward their own philosophical growth and corresponding virtue. Noting that while the author's correspondence of the ascent of the soul through embodying particular virtues in specific dialogues in the Iamblichean curriculum is incomplete, it is clear that the *Prolegomena* advocates that this arrangement promotes the readers' ascent and good through the realization and actualization of the particular *skopos* of each dialogue in one's individual soul. This may then be viewed as the Good or final cause of the dialogue. Recalling that the *Prolegomena* revers Plato for both his wisdom[66] and form of life (τὸ εἶδος τῆς ζωῆς), principally characterized

66 *Proleg.* 6.8–13. See also 6.18 where the Athenians are said to celebrate Plato's birthday with the song, "On this day the Gods gave Plato to mankind."

by his ability to purify individuals[67] we can see more clearly why the *Prolegomena* regards him as a healer of human souls. Keeping an eye on the *Prolegomena*'s insistence that Plato crafted dialogues that resembled the cosmos and its causes, we see that unlike Asclepius, Plato's purgative ability draws from his kinship or likeness with demiurgic activity insofar as he reproduces the true causes of the cosmos in his philosophical system and texts. Due to this Plato's dialogues invite readers to engage with those very divine and transcendent causes and, as such, they initiate readers into becoming like the text, their author, and the cosmos through a process of enacting and tending to the divine causes in themselves.[68]

67 *Proleg.* 1.38–41.

68 See Layne (2016).

CHAPTER 30

Olympiodorus of Alexandria

Michael Griffin

Olympiodorus was born at the turn of the sixth century CE.[1] His name, which means "gift of Zeus," implies that he was born to traditionally "Hellenic" parents.[2] As a young man, he would have studied Greek language, literature, and rhetoric[3] before applying to join the philosophical school led by Ammonius, where he found a close-knit academic "family" bound together by a strong, private oral tradition.[4] He grew fond of Ammonius' anecdotes and conversation,[5] and presumably he heard his teacher's perspective on the Christian riot of 486 and the subsequent imperial inquest into the activities of the pagan intellectual community.[6] Ammonius' colleague Isidore and his pupil Damascius had

1 For overviews of Olympiodorus' life and philosophy, see Wildberg (2008a), Opsomer (2010), and Westerink (1990). For his relationship with contemporary Christianity, see Tarrant (1997) and Griffin (2014b). Since Olympiodorus indicates that he heard Ammonius lecture (e.g., *in Gorg.* 39.2), whereas he was actively lecturing in 565 (the secure date of his lectures *On Aristotle's Meteorology*, based on his report of a comet passing at 52.31), his birth could not have fallen far outside 495–505.

2 It is also possible, though less likely, that Olympiodorus was born to a Christian family but attracted to traditional "Hellenic" or pagan philosophy at Ammonius' school, where he could have taken a new name; for the atmosphere of religious experimentation that prevailed at least until Nicomedes' investigation in 487/88, see Watts (2010), 1–22.

3 For the course of *paideia* in late antiquity, see Cribiore (2001), Kaster (1988), Hadot (1984). For Olympiodorus' own attitude to Hellenic *paideia,* see Tarrant (1997), 182–3.

4 For the atmosphere of the Alexandrian school, including the oral tradition handed down in private by the professor, see Watts (2010), 29–88, esp. 39 and 63. For these traditions more generally, see Cox (1983), 9–20; Cox Miller (2000), 242–4. For the environment of the later Neoplatonic school more broadly, see Hoffmann (2006).

5 For Olympiodorus' use of Ammonius' anecdotes in class, see *in Gorg.* 24.2, 39.2, 40.5, 44.5, 44.6, 48.5, with comments by Jackson, Lycos & Tarrant (1998), 252 n.739.

6 See Watts (2010), esp. 1–22.

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narrowly escaped to Athens, while Ammonius continued to live and teach in Alexandria, perhaps under limiting conditions.[7]

Around 515, as Olympiodorus was embarking on his studies under Ammonius, Damascius was elected head of the Platonic Academy in Athens. With Damascius and Isidore had gone some of the Alexandrian school's staunchly pagan identity. Ammonius' school may have been more accommodating to Christianity: at any rate, Olympiodorus' senior contemporaries included Christians like John Philoponus, an innovator who edited and sometimes criticized Ammonius, but was never elected to the chair in philosophy.[8] Ammonius defended pagan philosophical positions, but his students could disagree.[9] Within a generation, even the school's lecturers would carry Christian names. Olympiodorus was acutely aware of his role between two cultures, as a mediator of Hellenic values for a new and predominantly Christian student body.[10]

Olympiodorus was elected to the chair of philosophy when he was young, perhaps in the 520s. He calls Ammonius *progonos*, "ancestor", which might imply that another professor, such as the mathematician Eutocius,[11] intervened between them. Olympiodorus lectured on the standard Aristotelian and Platonic curricula (see below) from the 520s until at least the spring of 565, the date of his surviving course on Aristotle's *Meteorology*. During his long life, he saw the accession of Justinian in 527, the closure of the Platonic Academy[12] and the exile of the Athenian philosophers between 529 and 532, the imperial implementation of "a machinery … to wipe out paganism on a broad scale",[13] the dawn of a newly united Roman Empire, and its decline in the

7 Damascius famously implies (*PH* 118B Athanassiadi) that Ammonius managed to arrive at some sort of "agreement" (ὁμολογία) with "the overseer of the prevailing doctrine" (τὸν ἐπισκοποῦντα … τὴν κρατοῦσαν δόξαν, perhaps a circumlocution for Peter Mongus; compare Athanassiadi (1999) ad loc., Westerink (1990), 327. The nature of Ammonius' agreement has been a subject of intense speculation. Sorabji (2005) has proposed that Ammonius agreed not to promote pagan ritual or "theurgy" in public. See van Den Berg (2004) and Blank (2010), 659–60 for further discussion of this proposal.

8 John is always described as *grammatikos*, not *philosophos*.

9 As evidenced by Zacharias' *Ammonius*. Dillon, Russell, and Gertz (2012).

10 See Tarrant (1997), 182–3, and for *paideia* in late antiquity, Cribiore (2001), Kaster (1988), Hadot (1984).

11 Named by Elias, *On Aristotle's Prior Analytics* 134.4.

12 Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.47.

13 *Codex Justinianus* 1.11.9–10, including legislation under which pagans could be tried and executed. Cf. Wildberg (2005), 332.

wake of a pandemic plague, which reached Alexandria in September of 541.[14] Olympiodorus might hint at his personal experience in a Platonic allusion: "under such a [hostile] constitution, one must create a fortress (*teikhion*) for oneself, and live quietly (*hēsukhazein*) within it all the time" (*in Gorg.* 45.2,32–36).

As a philosopher, Olympiodorus draws a clear picture of the philosopher's role in society. A community can be divided into ordinary folk (*hoi polloi*) and the educated (*pepaideumenoi*), who are trained in grammar, rhetoric, medicine, poetry, or philosophy (cf. *in Alc.* 95,17). While other educational disciplines merely reproduce themselves, philosophy has a special status (*in Alc.* 87,10; 65,8),[15] echoing characterizations found in Plato: the philosopher fosters excellence (*aretē*), and cultivates good human beings (*kaloi kagathoi*, Olymp. *in Gorg.* 45.2). He can "turn" young people toward the good life (*in Gorg.* 0.1, 1.6), laying the groundwork for a graded "ascent" on the ladder of virtue (*in Phd.* 8.2–3). Moreover, although Olympiodorus disagrees with Christian doctrine on key points – including the eternity of the cosmos, the worship of sacred images, the prospect of eternal punishment, and even the merits of pagan ritual[16] – he believes that Christians and "Hellenes" share a reservoir of "common concepts" (*koinai ennoiai*) that conduce to a well-lived human life.[17] Religious disagreements arguably belong to the surface level of "myth"; philosophy addresses the deeper level of "actual truth", the morals (*epimuthion*) to which superficially different myths refer (*in Gorg.* 34.4).[18]

In light of this degree of intercultural diplomacy, Olympiodorus has sometimes been criticized for an extreme "pliability", particularly in his relationship to Christianity, and in his willingness to "harmonize" virtually any system with his own; Westerink described his practice as a "teaching routine" rather than a philosophy.[19] But as Tarrant has pointed out,[20] Olympiodorus' exegetical approach is best viewed in a broader light. His flexible treatment of mythologies

14 Horden (2005).

15 See Watts (2006), 6. On the cycle of liberal education leading up to philosophical studies, see Hadot (1984).

16 *Daimōnes*: Olymp. *in Alc.* 3, 15.3 ff. Eternity: *in Gorg.* 11.2, 65.26, and *in Meteor.* 118.10–119.8. Theurgy: *in Phd.* 8.2.1–20.

17 As Tarrant (1997), 189–91 observes. That "God is good" and worthy of honour or that parents are worthy of respect (*in Gorg.* 41.2), for example, seem to be points of common ground.

18 cf. Griffin (2014b) and (2015), Introduction, and Jackson et al. (1998), 290 n.876.

19 Westerink (1976), 23.

20 Tarrant (1997).

is not *merely* a response to the social pressures of Christianity. Olympiodorus regards all myths as falsehoods imaging the truth,[21] but observes that his contemporaries "respect only what is apparent, and does not search at all for what is concealed in the depths of the myth" (*in Gorg.* 46.4). On his view, it is the philosopher's role, not to debate myths, but to penetrate to the real meaning of the stories. As we will find below, his hermeneutical approach to Plato is accordingly allegorical.

I Plato and the Platonic Curriculum

The later Neoplatonists regarded the close study of classical texts as a kind of "spiritual exercise", integral to the cultivation of higher philosophical virtue.[22] Newcomers to the Alexandrian school studied Aristotle,[23] with the appropriate preparation,[24] and then embarked on Plato's dialogues in the curricular order determined by Iamblichus of Chalcis two centuries earlier:[25] *Alcibiades, Gorgias, Phaedo, Cratylus, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Phaedrus, Symposium,* and *Philebus*, followed by two "complete" texts, *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*. Each lecture (*praxis*) would normally occupy about an hour, in which the lecturer would offer a high-level analysis (*theōria*) of a passage of text, followed by a line-by-line analysis (*lexis*); this division probably codified Proclus' teaching style.[26]

Before studying philosophy in earnest, a newcomer may have been introduced to "baby ethics" – material like the Pythagorean *Golden Verses* or Epictetus' *Handbook*, or the basic morals inherent in myth and rhetoric.[27] But the beginning of serious philosophy was logic, which was essentially Aristotelian demonstration (*apodeixis*). Olympiodorus recommends the study of Aristotle, beginning with the *Categories*, because this discipline promotes precision (ἀκρίβεια) in defining the goals of human life (*Prolegomena* 1.3–24), and adds:

21 On this point, see also *Rep.* II 377a, and Jackson et al. (1998), 290 n.876.

22 See Hoffmann (1987), 83–90; Hoffmann (2006). The phrase "spiritual exercise", drawn from Ignatius of Loyola, was applied to ancient practices by Hadot (1995).

23 For the Aristotelian curriculum, see for example Griffin forthcoming; Marinus, *Vit. Procl.* 13, in Edwards (2000); Mansfeld (1994), Hadot (1991).

24 See Mansfeld (1994), Hadot (1991).

25 See Festugière (1969), Hadot (1978), ch. 7.5 = Hadot (2001), ch. 3.5.

26 Beutler (1949), 226.

27 See the introductions to Brittain and Brennan (2002); Brennan and Brittain (2002).

> Since we wish to enjoy the fountain of goods, we hurry to lay hold of Aristotle's philosophy, which furnishes life with the source of good things … (*Prolegomena* 1.3–4)

After logic, the student would continue with Aristotelian ethics, physics, mathematics, and theology (metaphysics).[28] After completing the course in metaphysics, the student would turn to Plato. (The prior curriculum would already have situated Aristotle within a Platonist framework, gently correcting or harmonizing with Plato his occasional critiques of the Academy).[29] Olympiodorus frames the study of Plato as a path to the good life:

> [A]ll human beings reach out for Plato's philosophy, because all people wish to draw benefit from it; they are eager to be enchanted by its fountain, and to quench their thirst with Plato's inspirations. (*in Alc.* 1.6–7)

However, it is also worth stressing that Olympiodorus presents his Platonic lectures in terms that are accessible to a relative newcomer, with limited philosophical expertise. A comparison of Olympiodorus' lectures on the *Alcibiades* with Proclus' much more demanding commentary on the same dialogue is illustrative: Olympiodorus' lectures were probably open to a broad audience, whose interests were not always technical.

To retrace the Alexandrian school's approach to Plato, it may be useful to survey the "ladder of virtues" that the Platonic curriculum is designed to help the student to ascend (Olymp. *in Phd.* 8.2.1–20; Damasc. *in Phd.* 1.138).[30] Before a student begins the study of philosophy, according to Damascius and Olympiodorus, we pursue "pre-philosophical" virtues.

Pre-philosophical virtues, like Aristotle's virtues of nature (EN 6.13) and habit (EN 2.1), belong to us either:

1. By our natural constitution (*phusikē aretē,* over which we have little control, as a lion is bound to be courageous); or

28 cf. Elias, *in Cat.* 107.24–27.

29 See Hadot (2015) on the Alexandrian school's approach to harmony, and Karamanolis (2006), ch. 7 on the Porphyrian sources of the later Neoplatonic consensus. Saffrey suggests that Syrianus, for example, denied Aristotle a full understanding of metaphysics (1987); Ammonius was especially strongly committed to harmony (see for example Asclepius *in Metaph.* 69.17–27; *in Int.* 39,11). For an extensive sample of Syrianus' handling of Aristotelian polemics, see his commentary on *Metaph.* MN. Dillon and O'Meara (2006).

30 Dillon (1977/1996), O'Meara (2013) and (2012a), Tarrant (2007). On the curricular ascent, see also Hoffmann (1987), Griffin (2014a) and (2015).

2. By habituation (*ēthikē aretē*), which might be fostered by myths and stories and rhetoric (such as the Pythagorean *Golden Verses*, or perhaps moral myths in rhetorical schools).

When we embark on philosophy, or become a "philosopher" in training in the Alexandrian school, we begin to develop *philosophical virtues:*

3. We cultivate civic or constitutional[31] virtue (*politikē aretē*), which works on the right organization of our own soul and the souls of our fellow citizens, placing reason in charge over spirited emotion and appetite, but still looking primarily to the outer world and our actions in it. Here, we begin to read works such as Plato's *Alcibiades* and *Gorgias*.
4. We strive to "purify" or separate the soul from the body so far as possible (reading Plato's *Phaedo*).
5. The philosopher of "contemplative virtue" (*theorētikē aretē*) surveys the intelligible realm through the lens of dialogues such as the *Sophist, Philebus* or one of the "complete" texts, *Timaeus* (authoritative for natural philosophy) and *Parmenides* (authoritative for metaphysics).

Finally, altogether beyond the philosophical curriculum, comes the training of the highest degree of human achievement, **theurgic** or **paradigmatic** virtues:

6. The virtue of the "theurgist" who is identified with the divine (*in Phd.* 8.2.1–20), and achieves "likeness to God".[32]

Through this curriculum, the student strives to achieve successive grades of virtue, contemplate intelligible reality (Simplicius, *in Cat*. 73.32–74.3), and achieve "likeness to God" (in the language of Plato, *Theaetetus* 176b; cf. Olymp. *Proleg. Log*. 16.25).

This curriculum had been adopted by Ammonius' father Hermias from the Athenian school of Syrianus. Despite these close historical ties between the Alexandrians and Athenians, some scholars, especially Karl Praechter, have

31 As Jackson et al. (1998) point out, the force of the adjective *politikos* in the phrase *politikē aretē* is arguably nearer to "constitutional" than "civic" or "social": the point is that these forms of excellence have to do with the *organization* or *constitution* of a complex individual or community. I will use both "civic" and "constitutional" in translating the adjective here.

32 On this scale of virtues, see for example O'Meara (2013) and (2012), Dillon (1996). For its use by Olympiodorus, see for example Griffin (2015), Introduction. For the Platonic curriculum and its origins, see Westerink (1962), XXXIX–XL.

striven to distinguish the two schools.[33] It is now widely agreed that the Alexandrians were broadly "orthodox" in their approach to Plato and Aristotle:[34] while there are individual differences, many derive from a pedagogical "simplifying" tendency on the part of Ammonius and several of his pupils.

II Works

We can attribute to Olympiodorus a broad cross-section of courses on the traditional Aristotelian and Platonic curricula.[35] Olympiodorus' course on Plato's *Gorgias* makes heavy use of anecdotes of Ammonius, particularly toward the end of the course.[36] Westerink concludes that these lectures were delivered early in Olympiodorus' life.[37] Olympiodorus' course on the *Alcibiades* draws on Damascius as well as Proclus, and this course is presumably later.[38] These lectures show that he has read Proclus' commentary closely, and they show sympathy for both Proclus and Damascius; it is tempting to speculate that Olympiodorus gained access to new manuscripts from the Athenian school after the 520s, or even met Damascius in person. These (presumably later) lectures on the *Alcibiades* are more difficult to date, but it is fair to

33 Praechter (1910), 151–6; (1912).

34 See Lloyd (1970), Hadot (1978 and 2015), Verrycken (1990), and Blank (2010), 663–6.

35 These include lectures on Porphyry's *Isagoge* (now lost), a surviving *Prolegomena* to Aristotelian Philosophy (extant), a commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* (extant) and *De Interpretatione* (partially extant as scholia, included in Tarán (1978)), *On Generation and Corruption* (lost, but mentioned by Arabic sources: see Westerink (1976) 21–22, nn.32–33), *Meteorology* (extant; delivered in 565) and *De Anima* (lost, but mentioned by Arabic sources); and lectures on Plato's *Alcibiades* (extant; delivered c. 555–60?), *Gorgias* (extant; delivered in the 520s?), *Phaedo* (extant for *Phd.* 62c–79e; delivered between 530s and 540s?), and *Sophist* (lost, but cited in Arabic sources, and mentioned by Olympiodorus himself at *in Alc.* 110,8–9).

36 As has been frequently pointed out; see e.g. Westerink (1990), 331; Watts (2010), 61–62. For exegesis, e.g., at 32.2, 41.9; for personal anecdotes, 24.2, 39.2, 40.5, 44.5, 44.6, 48.5, with comments by Jackson, Lycos & Tarrant (1998), 252 n.739.

37 Westerink (1990), 331; see also Jackson, Lycos and Tarrant (1998), 3–4.

38 As Opsomer points out (2010), 698. For instance, Olympiodorus accepts Proclus' interpretation of the phrase "self itself" (*auto to auto,* from *Alc.* 130d) without discussion in his lectures on *in Gorg.* (18.2, 103.26–104.2) and *in Phd.* (8.6.10–12), but in lecturing on the *Alcibiades* he attempts to adjudicate and harmonize Proclus and Damascius (204.15–205.7; 209.15–210.11; see also 5.17–8.14 on the topic or *skopos* of the dialogue)

suppose that they belong to the later 550s or 560s.[39] As stated, the lectures on Aristotle's *Meteorology* belong to March/April 565. Other works credited to him are less certain.[40]

III Interpretation of Plato and Thought

Olympiodorus' metaphysics retains the standard hypostases of Neoplatonism: the One (*to hen*), Intellect (*nous,* subdivided into the triad Being, Life, and Intellect), and Soul (*psukhē*) (*in Alc.* 103.10; 10918–1112). He praises Aristotle's recognition of a single first principle (*Metaph.* Λ), but he criticizes Aristotle for ranking that principle with Intellect, the second hypostasis (*in Alc.* 122.13; 145.6–9).[41] This move on Olympiodorus' part is especially interesting, given

39 On the one hand, at 141.1–3 Olympiodorus comments that Plato refused tuition fees because of his wealth, "which is why the endowment [of the Academy] has lasted until today, despite the many confiscations that are underway (*ginomenōn*)". This implies that the lectures were delivered before the closure of the Athenian school in 529, when Justinian's implementation of "a machinery … to wipe out paganism on a broad scale" came into effect across the empire (cf. *Codex Justinianus* 1.11.9–10), including legislation under which pagans could be tried and executed. Cf. Wildberg (2005), 332. On the other hand, Olympiodorus refers to the recent arrival of a governor named Hephaestus (2.80–82), an event that likely took place in 546. The right conclusion may be that the endowment of the Academy continued after 529, or even, with Tannery ((1896), 286), that a portion of the Athenian school's private revenues was reinstated upon their return to support their ongoing scholarship; see also Westerink (1990), 330.

40 The surviving *Proleg.*, sometimes credited to Olympiodorus, presumably was composed by a student or member of his school. See Westerink, Trouillard and Segonds (1990). A commentary on Paulus of Alexandria, dateable to summer 564, demonstrates an affinity with Olympiodorus' school, but diverges from Olympiodorus on important points. See Opsomer (2010), 700; 710. Westerink has shown that the anonymous notes on the *Phd.* and *Phlb.* preserved in Marc. gr. 196 belong to Damascius. See Westerink (1959), xv–xx; (1977), 15–77. A commentary on the alchemist Zosimus of Panoplis *On Operation* (*Kat' energeian*) was once attributed to Olympiodorus, but its treatment of Aristotle and Plato seems unlikely to belong to an Alexandrian philosophy professor; more probably, the attribution to Olympiodorus aimed to strengthen the manuscript's authority. As Viano (2006) emphasizes, the author may have worked from Olympiodorus' lectures on Aristotle's *Meteorology*; perhaps he was a Christian alchemist who studied under Olympiodorus. (The author ascribes to "the Lord" (94.13–15) a quotation from St. Paul (2 Cor 3:6), as Wildberg (2008a), § 4 points out). Finally, Olympiodorus was sometimes mistakenly identified with the deacon, but this is impossible on chronological grounds. See Westerink (1976), 20.

41 Opsomer (2010), 705 n.29 also points to a parallel at David (Elias) *in Cat.* 120.24–30.

Ammonius' preference for harmonization of Plato and Aristotle, and it presumably reflects Olympiodorus' reliance in the *Alcibiades* commentary on Proclus and Damascius. Like them, however, he is also strongly committed to the harmony of Plato and Aristotle in general (*in Alc.* 5.29–32). In psychology, Olympiodorus stresses the instrumental role of the "common concepts" (*koinai ennoiai*) that we all share in virtue of our participation in Intellect (*in Alc.* 18.1–5; 40.18–41.4):[42] once refined by dialectic, they make philosophical demonstration possible (e.g., *in Gorg.* 3.1).

Olympiodorus begins his class on the *Alcibiades*, the first work of the Iamblichean curriculum, by describing Plato as a source of "inspirations" (*enthousiasmoi*) capable of providing the greatest benefit to human beings (*in Alc.* 1.3–2.13). In one sense, he thereby frames the Platonic text as containing a kind of divine revelation, on par with the Christian revelation.[43] But the concept of "inspiration" is also important in Olympiodorus' scheme of virtues or grades of excellence (*aretē*), discussed above: as philosophical practice leads to *civic* virtue, *purificatory* virtue, and *contemplative* virtue, inspiration (*enthousiasmos*) leads to *theurgic* virtue, or "likeness to God" (cf. *Tht.* 176b). Thus right from the beginning of the Platonic curriculum, Olympiodorus presents Plato's text as capable of revealing the highest good for a human being.

In keeping with his differentiation of the "surface level" and deeper meaning of myth, Olympiodorus' hermeneutical approach to the Platonic text is deeply allegorical. An excellent specimen of his exegetical technique is his paraphrase and discussion of *Alcibiades* 132d–133c, where Socrates likens self-knowledge through philosophical dialogue to the process of an eye recognizing itself in a mirror. Olympiodorus' paraphase runs (7,9–8,5):[44]

> Therefore Socrates … converses with [Alcibiades] about *civic* self-knowledge, and incorporates [a conversation] about *purificatory* and *contemplative* [self-knowledge]. For he says in the present work, "Just as, if the Demiurge had told the eye, 'Look at yourself', it would have been unable to do so on account of its not being self-moving, but would have looked [instead] at another eye, and not at any random part of it, but at the one entrusted with optical activity (which is also called the "pupil" (*korê*), because of the appearance of little images in it), so too should you, Alcibiades, since you have blinded the self-moving in you by giving

42 See Opsomer (2010), 705–6.

43 In the *Life of Plato* that begins the *Alcibiades* lectures, as well, Olympiodorus emphasizes the story of Plato's divine conception (2.21–24).

44 Translations here and following are from Griffin (2015).

> yourself over to non-rational activities, look away to me – that is, to the soul of Socrates – and not to any random part of this, but to the highest part, and you shall see in me intellect (*nous*) and god."

Olympiodorus explains the passage as an allegory for ascent on the ladder of virtues (8,5–12):

> Now by saying "look away to me", he has indicated that the target of the dialogue is self-knowledge in a civic sense; and by saying "not to any random part," that it is also [self-knowledge] in a purificatory sense, for self-purification is the province of the highest part of the soul; and by saying "you shall see in me intellect", [he has indicated] that it is also [self-knowledge] in a contemplative sense, for engaging with the realities in accordance with his intellect befits the contemplative; and through saying "and god", [he has indicated] that it is also [self-knowledge] in an inspired sense, for we are inspired according to the divine in us, which is simple, just as is the divine itself.

As the passage also implies, Olympiodorus is prepared to interpret individual characters in the dialogues as allegories for states of mind and hypostases in the metaphysical system of later Neoplatonism. For example, like Proclus, he regards Socrates as signifying intellect (*nous*).[45] Another excellent example is his treatment of Socrates' *daimonion* and the order of *daimones* in general.[46] In this respect, and in regarding the Platonic dialogue as a "cosmos" isomorphic with reality, he follows Proclus.[47]

Another helpful illustration of Olympiodorus' approach is his analysis of Socrates' refutation of Callicles in the *Gorgias*.[48] Callicles famously delivers a tirade to Socrates depicting the value of unrestricted appetite:

> **Callicles:** [T]his is what's admirable and just by nature – and I'll say it to you now with all frankness – that the man who'll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain

45 See Griffin (2014a) and, for example, Olymp., *in Gorg*. 0.8.

46 cf. Renaud (2012).

47 Cf. *Proleg.* 4. Westerink (1962) proposed that this section of the *Prolegomena* might draw on Proclus' lost Prolegomena – to which Proclus may be alluding at *in Alc*. 10.3–14, when he refers us to his fuller remarks on the dialogue as a cosmos "in other works" (*en allois*).

48 Olympiodorus' treatment of the closing stretch of the *Gorgias* was studied in detail by Kimon Lycos (1994), in a pioneering examination of Olympiodorus' hermeneutics.

> them. And when they are as large as possible, he ought to be competent to devote himself to them by virtue of his bravery and intelligence, and to fill them with whatever he may have an appetite for at the time … the truth of it, Socrates – the thing you claim to pursue – is like this: wantonness, lack of discipline, and freedom, if available in good supply, are excellence and happiness; as for these other things, these fancy phrases, these contracts of men that go against nature, they're worthless nonsense! (491e–492c) (trans.) Zeyl

Socrates – with Callicles' reluctant consent – pins down an implication of his expostulation, namely, the proposition that the human good just *is* pleasure:

> **Socrates:** Tell me now too whether you say that the pleasant and the good are the same or whether there is some pleasure that isn't good. **Callicles:** Well, to keep my argument from being inconsistent if I say that they are different, I say they're the same. (495a)

Socrates then embarks on a full-out dialectical effort to refute the view that pleasure is identical with the good. Callicles becomes recalcitrant and claims to "go along" with Socrates merely for the sake of the argument (501c); eventually, Callicles drops out entirely and Socrates finishes the argument as both questioner and answerer in the dialectical exchange (505d–506c).

Why does Plato portray Socrates drawing out this full tirade, then challenging it, with Callicles finally dropping out of the exchange? Today, we might suppose that Plato is utilizing the dialogue form to explore the strengths, and especially the weaknesses, of various arguments in favour of (a particular vintage of) ethical hedonism. As commentators, we might describe Socrates' exchange with Callicles on the analogy of the repartee of a commentator with an author at a philosophy conference, striving iteratively – and, ideally, in collaboration – to improve one or more defined philosophical positions, testing one counter–argument after another.[49] In the service of this aim, we might ask, for instance, whether Plato has actually given Callicles the best arguments available to him, and test whether Socrates' critiques hit home against the strongest available version of Callicles' view. We might reasonably set aside the "literary"

49 Annas (2004) offers a more detailed account of the analytical approach to Plato since the 1960s (for an extended discussion of the Third Man argument as a sample, see 30–33). Lycos (1994) contrasts Olympiodorus' exegetical approach with modern commentators including Gosling and Taylor (1982).

dimensions of Plato's portrayal, including the poetic excesses of Callicles' tirade and the fact that he eventually drops out of the conversation.

Olympiodorus' approach begins from basically different assumptions, as we have seen above. For him, Plato is a doctor of the soul, and the literary form of the dialogue models mimetic methods for the therapy of the soul, for conveying the individual student's *psychē* from a state of sickness to health or virtue (*aretē*). Thus, for example, his explanation for the elicitation of Callicles' lavish presentation of the case for hedonism rests on a medical analogy:

> Note that [Socrates] invites Callicles to expound every claim in favour of base pleasure, so that nothing should remain unrefuted … So too a doctor delights when [diseased] matter emerges, and says, "It is good that it has come out." 29.2 (trans., here and following) from Jackson et al. (1998)

But the root of Olympiodorus' interpretation of the *Gorgias* is his allegory of the primary speaking characters in the dialogue, as they "map" onto Platonic metaphysics and psychology:

> Next it is worth investigating the *number* and *symbolism* of the characters. There are five characters: Socrates, Chaerephon, Gorgias, Polus, Callicles. Socrates corresponds to the intelligent and knowledgeable [type of soul], Chaerephon to the rightly–opining, Gorgias to the misguided … Polus corresponds to the unjust [character] bent solely on ambition, whereas Callicles corresponds to the swinish and pleasure–loving.[50] (0.8)

Here, Olympiodorus treats the protagonists as representative of a hierarchy of faculties or capacities of the soul. This analogy can be understood in terms of the tripartition of the soul into reason (*logos*), spirited–emotion (*thumos*), and appetite (*epithumia*) in the fourth book of Plato's *Republic*, as later lectures show clearly (see for example 27.2, below). (1) Socrates, Chaerephon, and Gorgias are all analogous to (*analogei*) states of reason in the soul: Socrates represents the soul's intelligent (*noeros*) or epistemic capacity, or *nous*

50 The text of the passage runs (in Westerink's edition): πέντε τοίνυν παραλαμβάνεται πρόσωπα, Σωκράτης Χαιρεφῶν Γοργίας Πῶλος Καλλικλῆς. ἀναλογεῖ τοίνυν ὁ μὲν Σωκράτης τῷ νοερῷ καὶ ἐπιστημονικῷ, ὁ δὲ Χαιρεφῶν τῷ ὀρθοδοξαστικῷ, ὁ δὲ Γοργίας τῷ διεστραμμένῳ (οὗτος γὰρ οὐ πάνυ ἦν κατακρατηθεὶς τῇ ἀδικίᾳ ἀλλ' ἀμφιβόλως εἶχεν εἰ πεισθείη ἢ μή), ὁ δὲ Πῶλος τῇ ἀδικίᾳ καὶ τῷ μόνως φιλοτίμῳ, ὁ δὲ Καλλικλῆς τῷ ὑώδει καὶ φιληδόνῳ. As Westerink (1970) and Jackson et al. (1998) point out (ad loc.), Callicles is also associated with the love of pleasure in Proclus (*in Remp.* 2.176.4–9).

itself, as he often does in Neoplatonic exegesis,[51] while Chaerephon represents true belief, and Gorgias represents false belief. (2) Polus represents spirited–emotion in a hostile state, while (3) Callicles represents appetite unrestrained by temperance, like the "many-headed beast" of *Republic* 9 (588c). Polus and Callicles signify the non-rational parts of the soul, then, in a troubled state, which leads to error; thus they need to be corrected by "Socrates" – intelligence. The dialogue represents the encounter of these inward parts of the soul. This is the reason why, after the unrestrained "case" put by appetite, a correction or refutative "cross-examination" by intelligence is necessary:

> Now, since we make the biggest mistakes for the following three reasons, because we have a *misguided opinion* or through *temper* or through *appetite*, and since *misguided* character was refuted in the arguments with Gorgias, and hot-tempered character in those with Polus, so now the appetitive character must be refuted, so that we may put complete trust in the truth and come as near as possible to the common notions. (27.2)

Olympiodorus also explains in these terms why Callicles drops out of the conversation as an active speaking partner. It is because the dialogue portrays the therapeutic progress of the encounter between reason and appetite: reason should first prevail over appetite, then, when appetite is silenced, proceed alone in deliberation.

> So Socrates, on completing this discussion, since Callicles refuses to converse [503d–506c], examines the argument by himself.... For we should first prevail over the many-headed beasts [*Rep.* 588c], i.e. shut up the passions, and then proceed by oneself on this basis. (34.3)

The result, of course, is not the elimination of appetite, but its education and "soothing".

> We should remember these arguments, for they are strong enough to soothe the many-headed beasts within us (35.3)

For Olympiodorus, the target or goal (*skopos*) of the dialogue is not the defense or critique of a particular philosophical position, so much as it is the tracing of a prescription for internal dialogue between the parts or aspects of the soul, conducing to psychological health. Thus Olympiodorus stresses that the

51 See also Griffin (2014d).

dialogue aims to cultivate constitutional well-being, or, in terms of the scale of virtues, constitutional or civic *aretē*.[52] As a teacher of philosophy, he aims to help the student to follow that psychological pattern of transformation which is referenced by Socrates' conversation with Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles – signifying successive encounters between reason, spirited-emotion, and appetite. Both the structure of Plato's argument, and the "literary" features of his portrayal of the characters, serve this end.

IV Conclusions

Olympiodorus may have been the last professor of philosophy in Alexandria without a commitment to Christianity, at least in name. Several of his pupils, active in the later sixth and early seventh centuries, had Christian names (if the attributions to "Elias" and "David" are reliable);[53] but their philosophy remained mainly independent, and they continued to promote Olympiodorus' positions on questions such as the eternity of the world.[54] Stephanus[55] recognizes the authority of Christian doctrine, but does not refute traditional pagan positions such as the eternity of the world, the rationality of the heavens, and the existence of the human soul before birth.[56] The pupils of Olympiodorus, and of John Philoponus,[57] probably continued the school's pedagogical tradition at least into the seventh century. Copies of the school's lectures and commentaries resurface at Constantinople in the "philosophical collection" of the tenth century, including the single manuscript that preserved Olympiodorus' Platonic lectures (Marc. gr. 196). Many would reach Italy in the fifteenth century with Basilius Bessarion to contribute to the Western renaissance of Neoplatonism.

52 See Jackson et al. (1998), 30–31.

53 See Wildberg (2008a), (2008b); on David, Calzolari and Barnes (2009).

54 See Westerink (1990), 340.

55 Usener (1879) proposed that Stephanus accepted an imperial appointment in 610, and it has been suggested that he brought the school's library to Constantinople. See Westerink (1986) as well as Rashed (2002), Goulet (2007), and on his identity, Wolska-Conus (1989). Roueché has provided strong reasons to doubt Usener's narrative. See Roueché (forthcoming) and (2012). I am indebted to Mossman Roueché for sharing his views, and for many helpful suggestions and references.

56 The eternity of the world "according to Aristotle," *in Int.* 540.27; the rationality of the heavens, 595.33–598,7; the pre-existence of the soul, 541.20–542.5. Some passages are very close to explicitly Christian views, such as Stephanus' treatment of future contingents and divine foreknowledge (*in Interpretatione* 35.34–36.8).

57 As Roueché (forthcoming) has attractively argued that the "teacher" of Stephanus named by him at *in Int.* 5.13 is John Philoponus.

CHAPTER 31

Simplicius of Cilicia: Plato's Last Interpreter

Gary Gabor

I Introduction

Simplicius is well regarded today as an insightful, comprehensive, detailed, sometimes repetitive, but generally useful and reliable interpreter of Aristotle.[1] How he reads other authors though – with the possible exception of the Presocratics – is less well studied.[2] In this chapter my aim is to examine Simplicius' interpretation of Plato. By this I mean not Simplicius' views regarding Platonism (though these of course influenced his interpretation), but rather the ways in which Simplicius read the particular dialogues written by Plato, as well as the history that had accumulated by his time regarding Plato's life and thought. While something of a picaresque task, given that Simplicius' extant commentaries all center on texts of either Aristotle or the Stoic Epictetus – the

1 See for instance the favorable assessment of Simplicius by, eg., Baltussen (2010), 715, and McKirahan (2001), 1. There is some dissent, though, regarding the commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima* that comes down under Simplicius' name – J.O. Urmson and Carlos Steel, for instance, both find it very untrustworthy as an interpretation of Aristotle's intentions there. Its reliance upon and respect for the third century Pythagoranizing Platonist Iamblichus, they believe, along with its excessive "Platonizing" character in fact are reasons why they doubt the author of the commentary is actually Simplicius, a subject which has become one of the most contentious subjects of Simplicius scholarship. For their arguments against Simplician authorship, cf. Urmson (1995), 2–4; Steel (1997b), 105–40 and 2012, vii–39. Against Urmson and Steel, it should be noted that Simplicius' use and respect for Platonic authors, including Iamblichus but also Plotinus, Syrianus, Damascius, and other "orthodox" Platonists of late antiquity, remains constant throughout all his commentaries. In this then the *De Anima* commentary is not unique, though the difference of degree with his other certain commentaries remains unclear. For Ilsetraut Hadot's recent forceful restatement of the argument for Simplicius' authorship, see Hadot (2014). N.b., this essay is dedicated to Alice Behnegar, my first interpreter of Plato.

2 Assessments of the "faithfulness" of Simplicius' reading of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, for instance in his commentary on the *Enchiridion*, vary. Some find him to be a reasonably informed, although occasionally incorrect, interpreter of Epictetus' Stoicism. For one generally positive assessment, see, e.g., Wildberg (2014). For some examples of "Platonist" misreading of Epictetus, see Brennan and Britain (2002), 4–10; Gabor (2014); Schils-Reydams (2007), 113; and Coughlin (2011), 39.

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Physics, *De Caelo*, *Categories*, and, disputedly, the *De Anima*, as well as the *Enchiridion* – nevertheless, his frequent references, allusions, and discussions of Plato's works in his writing provide ample evidence for gathering a good working picture of how Simplicius read him.

II Simplicius' General Approach to Reading Plato

Despite the charge often leveled against the Neoplatonic commentators – that they generally approach Plato dogmatically, tone-deaf to the stylistic and dramatic aspects of Plato's dialogues and lack of any sort of finesse or subtlety in distinguishing between Plato's own views and those of the characters found in the dialogues – it is good to report that Simplicius makes no such basic mistakes. Indeed, one recent assessment, by Hans Baltussen, makes Simplicius out to be more pedestrian than anything else: "Simplicius was obviously familiar with Plato's works and expresses coherent views on them, albeit in passing."[3] And indeed, while there are many brief references and allusions to Plato's work throughout Simplicius' commentaries (indeed, it is striking how often a line or thought from Plato will both generate and end discussion for Simplicius), there are many extended passages where Simplicius embarks on a much more substantial engagement with Plato. Simplicius separates the views of Plato from the Platonic Socrates, as he does for instance at *in Ench.* 28.33–34, as well as between Plato and other characters such as Timaeus. He also holds the interesting theory that the Athenian Stranger of the *Laws* was none other than Plato himself, and that here Plato presents his own final views "in his own person" (αὐτοπροσώπως: *in Ench.* 28.41). Simplicius thus demonstrates an admirable sensitivity to characterization, and suggests provocative and intriguing theories as to Plato's intentions and use of characters in his dialogues. His is not a monolithic Plato.

One next wonders how much of Plato's writings Simplicius read. Based on his frequent allusions to and explicit discussions of Platonic texts, it is safe to say that Simplicius could at least discuss the *Apology*, *Crito*, *Euthydemus*, *Alicibiades I*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Theaetetus*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Statesman*, *Sophist*, *Philebus,* and *Laws* with intelligence. He refers to the Socratic literature of some other authors, such as Xenophon,[4]

3 Baltussen (2010), 713.

4 Simplicius was familiar enough with Xenophon to even comment on his simpler style compared to Plato, a feature still familiar to students of Greek today; cf. *in Cat.* 25.16–18. In addition, significant references and allusions to Xenophon's writings, especially the *Memorabilia* and *Anabasis*, can be found in the *Enchiridion* commentary.

although his references to other Socratics, such as Aeschines and Antisthenes, make it less clear whether he was aware that they produced Socratic literature.[5] Simplicius was also, of course, clearly informed by his own Neoplatonic instruction and teachers at Alexandria and Athens. Their approach to Plato's dialogues clearly had an important influence on Simplicius. But Simplicius still had sufficient access to the primary source material to make his own judgments through a direct engagement with Plato's texts themselves, and he often differs from the views of his teachers. Importantly, then, Simplicius approaches Plato's texts both with an eye to identifying the philosophical content of the conversations, as well as remaining aware and attentive to ways in which characterization might affect the presentation of ideas. Simplicius was aware that Plato was engaging with actual historical persons, and that Plato's presentation of the characters in his dialogues was not the only possible way of rendering the historical and potentially non-historical figures that feature there. His reading of Plato, then, is not so different from our own approach today, and so has the potential to be helpful in our interpretation of the dialogues, just as his comments on Aristotle have long been recognized for their value.

That said, Simplicius does not hesitate to attribute particular and specific doctrines and goals for Platonic dialogues, and in this he does differ from some modern readers of Plato. Plato, for instance, is for Simplicius the discoverer of the nature of soul (*in Phys*. 285.33–286.4), revealer of the principles of physical objects and general composition of the world (*in De Caelo* 3.18–19), expositor of the six Neoplatonic causes (the four classic Aristotelian causes, as well as the paradigmatic and instrumental causes; cf. Hankinson (2002), 6), and in general one of the first and most important presenters of the interpenetrability of and analogy between the intelligible genera and all levels of being (*in Cat*. 74.31–75.8 and 83.27–29). Simplicius takes seriously Plato's mythologizing, even if the dialogic persona himself describes the myth as mixing in "an element of play" as the Eleatic Visitor does at *Statesman* 268d (for Simplicius' serious incorporation of the Visitor's myth, see *in De Caelo* 96.18–20). Simplicius is also comfortable with reading across and interpreting the dialogues in light of each other, as for instance when he synoptically reads Plato's cosmology and account of the generation in the *Timaeus* in terms of both the *Phaedrus* and the *Statesman* (*in De Caelo* 93.15–22; 96.12–20; 104.28–105.13).

5 Thus, I am even less sanguine than Renaud and Tarrant (2015), 85, on how much these authors may have influenced Simplicius, guarded as even their comments are. But for helpful discussion of the way Socratic literature was read and used in the later Roman empire, up to and including the cultural and educational milieu of Simplicius, see Renaud and Tarrant (2015), 85–89.

When commenting on Aristotle or Epictetus, Simplicius will often use a point in Plato's dialogues for raising problems and generating the "correct" line of interpretation of the authors at hand. At the beginning of the *De Caelo* commentary for instance he raises the question of the *skopos* of Aristotle's treatise and immediately compares it to Plato's goals in the *Timaeus*, and when he examines Aristotle's particular categories and postpraedicamenta in the *Categories* he often does so in light of various classifications made by Plato in his dialogues (see section IV below for further discussion). Simplicius, just as often as he will raise discussions, will also often very quickly resolve philosophical debates or points by referring to Plato as well. Simplicius will also, while commenting on Epictetus or Aristotle, take issue with what has been said about Plato, and clarify how both past and contemporary (to Simplicius) commentators interpret Plato incorrectly. So, even while Simplicius by and large focuses on offering the task at hand – offering an interpretation of Aristotle's or Epictetus' text, Plato's dialogues always function in the background, and it is clear that Simplicius has Plato ever in mind and in everything he does.

III Specifics of Simplicius' Approach

To get a better sense of how Simplicius reads Plato, let us take a closer look at some passages in more detail.

At the beginning of his commentary on the *Enchiridion*, Simplicius raises the question of who would best profit from Epictetus' moral advice (*in Ench.* 2.30–33). Noting that it is not for those who aspire to the higher end of the Neoplatonic scale of the virtues – the cathartic or theoretical virtues, i.e. those aspiring to either separate themselves from "the body and the bodily emotions" or to fully surpass "one's rational life to be wholly among the superior beings" – Simplicius instead identifies a more modest aim: those wishing to learn how to use one's body properly, as the instrument of the rational soul.[6] Part of the reason is because of the less "demonstrative" nature of Epictetus' advice, making it more amenable to introductory students than, say, the account of ethics that one finds in Aristotle's writings which presume some previous knowledge of dialectic. But, despite the value of Epictetus, Simplicius feels the need, in supporting Epictetus' claim that the real self is the rational soul, to appeal to Plato (*in Ench.* 3.3–19):

6 For more on the Neoplatonic hierarchy of the virtues and its development, see Hadot (2015), 63–64 and Tarrant (2014), 22–24.

> That this is the true human being, the one whose being and essence is that which is according to the rational soul, was primarily made clear by the Platonic Socrates in his dialogue with Alcibiades the fair, son of Kleinias. Epictetus, taking this as a hypothesis, teaches those already persuaded by it by what sort of life and deeds it is possible to perfect oneself as such as human. For just as the body is exercised by intensifying its natural motions, and so is brought to good health, so also the soul, rightly brings its essence and being towards its natural state through the activities natural to it. So it is no impediment to the study of these teachings, but rather is equally necessary, to put forward a preliminary articulation and proof of what Epictetus took as a hypothesis, that the true human is the rational soul, and that it uses the body as its instrument.[7]

In this passage Simplicius makes clear that it explicitly the *Platonic* Socrates he is talking about, and not necessarily the historical Socrates. He neither affirms nor denies that such a conversation could have taken place. For him, however, the essential features of the passage are the philosophical arguments provided by the literary character. Those philosophical positions serve as a necessary corrective for deficiencies in Epictetus' advice. While Epictetus' text is useful, it is only so once a proper foundation has been given for the principle underlying the moral advice throughout, namely that the rational soul is the true human being. That position, in Simplicius' view, is only firmly established by the arguments of the Platonic Socrates in the *Alicibiades I*. There a demonstrative proof is given for what Epictetus, in Simplicius' view, takes merely as a hypothesis: that the rational soul uses the human body as its instrument, much like an artisan will use her tools for her own projects and plans. Simplicius continues by summarizing the argument at *Alcibiades I* 129a2–130d1,[8] sticking closely to the text throughout.

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7 Translations of Simplicius are from the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle series edited by Richard Sorabji unless otherwise noted. Where multiple translations in the Ancient Commentators series exist, the translator has been noted. And a note here: though I have consulted Brittain and Brennan (2002), this passage is my own rendering.

8 The section of the dialogue that Simplicius focuses on and summarizes also occurs right before the philosophical and dramatic apex of the work, the analogy and metaphor between the soul and the eye that looks at itself through the mirror-like pupil of another at *Alc. I* 132e–133d. For more on the analysis of the philosophical apex of the *Alcibiades I*, as well as the interpretation offered by Simplicius' near-contemporary Neoplatonists, see Renaud and Tarrant (2015), 57–70.

Simplicius therefore makes use of the Platonic dialogues for key and crucial interventions that he deems necessary while commenting on Aristotle, Epictetus, and other authors, and many of his references are not much more than one would find in a simple and straightforward reading of the text in question. While he may never have devoted an entire commentary to a Platonic text alone,[9] the goal of Simplicius' pedagogical work remains clear – to provide an introduction and initiation to a thoroughly Platonic educational program and goal. Plato's text remained the goal, and the frequent touchstone, for his Aristotelian and Epictetan commentaries (and, one would suppose, any other commentaries he may have written, no longer extant),[10] as well as his frequent disagreements with predecessors and contemporaries who criticized Plato like Alexander Aphrodisias and Philoponus. One of Simplicius' regular complaints about such authors is that they themselves did not take the time to read the texts they undertook to criticize carefully enough – so, for instance, Simplicius could object that Alexander didn't bother to read Plato as much as he claimed,[11] or that Philoponus, despite his dubious label of "grammarian", was nevertheless not properly attentive to differences in meaning between words, and thus believed Plato and Aristotle disagreed much more often than they did (see Simplicius' account of the different meanings of "generation" in Plato and Aristotle below). Now, many of these interpretive strategies often seem to strike modern readers as overly forced, and a product of Simplicius' too strict adherence to a philosophical program that would seek to harmonize Plato and Aristotle at all costs. But it is important to bear in mind that Simplicius' arguments are always rooted in the texts in question, and often contain stronger points than a simple summary of the position might suggest.

One further question one might ask of Simplicius' interpretation of Plato is what he believed the hermeneutical point of the dialogues was. What, if anything, was Plato's ultimate goal in writing? This question obviously continues to exercise his interpreters today. One objection often raised against Neoplatonic interpretations of the dialogues is what – if anything – they have to offer when it comes to understanding the "early", aporetic dialogues. Neoplatonic dogmatizing does not seem commensurable with Socratic aporia. Later interpretive puzzles like the *Parmenides* pose similar problems.

9 But cf. Hadot (2014), 267–9.

10 For details, see Hadot (2014), 267–83 and Baltussen (2010).

11 Cf. *In Phys.* 560,11: "But Alexander, although he is accustomed to drag in Plato even where he is quite irrelevant, for some reason has here forgotten Plato instead." (trans.) Urmson (1992).

One aspect of Simplicius' approach to Plato can be found in his *Categories* commentary. There, comparing Platonic (and Socratic) and Aristotelian dialectic, Simplicius comes to the following conclusion (*in Cat.* 70.14–24):

> When in dialogue Socrates seems to bring forth the beautiful which is in all things and the equal in all things, it is not because the beautiful within the many is completely undifferentiated, but because the dialectical method distinguishes our conception which was heretofore mixed up, and incapable of separating the common from the particular, and then brings round our henceforth distinguished conceptions to unity (ἕνωσις), in the place of confusion, for this is the goal of dialectic, as Socrates showed in the *Republic*. Let us, then, not blame either Plato or Plato's teacher Socrates for constantly pointing out, in a dialectical manner, the common forms (τὰ κοινὰ εἴδη) – both those which are in participation, and those prior to participation – for it was necessary thus to remind those who conceive only of the differences between individuals (τῶν ἀτόμων διαφοραί), both of the commonality in individuals and of the common cause.[12]

There is ambiguity which "Socrates" Simplicius has in mind here – he appears to slide between the literary character – the "Socrates in dialogue" who discusses such topics as the "equal in all things" and the "beautiful in all things" – from "Socrates, the teacher of Plato". The latter appears to be a clear reference to the historical person. But both literary and historical figure are involved in the same task – turning individuals by means of a dialectical process away from particular differences (*diaphorai*) and to the common forms – both immanent and participated, transcendent and intelligible – and to the (single) common cause of all. Indeed, one might even offer this as Simplicius' proposal to the solution of the "Socratic problem" – the unity between the literary and the historical Socrates consists in the fact that he was involved in a similar dialectical task of turning individuals from differentiated and disparate forms of opinion to a unification of one's forms of reasoning. Whether the dialogues presented by Plato were actually ones performed by the historical Socrates seems to be left agnostic by Simplicius. But the general character and mission of Socrates was correctly captured by Plato in the dialogues, and thus the historical person still shines through, even if this or that argument cannot be attributed to him. Simplicius sees even a relatively early dialogue like

12 (trans.) Chase (2003), modified.

the *Euthydemus* as in line with this dialectical strategy, which might otherwise appear characteristic of the middle or late dialogues, noting as he does that "[t]here is nothing as effective as a precise definition of names to counteract sophistical quibbling; this is also said by Plato in the *Euthydemus*, and everyone else agrees that the double nature of name has transmitted a powerful incentive to dialectics" (*in Cat.* 22.9–13). Simplicius therefore sees both Socrates, as a literary and historical figure, as very closely allied with Plato's own more systematic goals in the dialogues, one which he also believes Aristotle fits well within. As Simplicius continues at *in Cat.* 70.20–24:

> Nor (...) should we mock Aristotle as if he did not know of the existence of common natures and pre-existing causes; Aristotle, who said there can be no demonstration at all without a universal premise. Rather, let us praise him for having grasped, with astonishing perspicacity, that these common and completely undifferentiated things, in and of themselves, are not on the level of existence of beings, but that it is we who, by abstracting them within our conceptions, have given them *per se* existence. But let this be enough on this subject, lest we say more than is appropriate. It was said because of those who try to show, contentiously but in vain, that the most eminent of philosophers differ from one another.

Simplicius also read Plato as himself part of a tradition, specifically the Pythagorean tradition. In this, Simplicius was probably heavily influenced by Iamblichus, and indeed he follows Iamblichus on many points in his interpretation of Plato. This is partially a response to those who would disallow the *De Anima* commentary as being by Simplicius, since it too is heavily influenced by Iamblichus, as noted previously.[13] But Simplicius' respect for Iamblichus is paramount throughout. For instance, discussing Plato's "esoteric" unwritten teachings in commenting on the *Physics*, Simplicius says (*in Phys.* 151.11–19):

> It is altogether likely that Plato should speak of the One and the indefinite dyad as principles of everything, since this is a Pythagorean doctrine, and Plato seems to follow the Pythagoreans at many points; but how would it be consistent for him, having called the indefinite dyad and the principles of the Forms the great and small, to use these terms to refer to matter? Plato separates matter off as existing only in the perceptible

13 Cf. n.2 above.

> universe and says clearly in the *Timaeus* that it belongs to coming to be, and that what comes to be comes to be in it; he said that the Forms are knowable by thought, while matter is "believable by bastard reasoning".[14]

Simplicius therefore finds a clear unity between the "Socratic" early dialogues of Plato, and the later "dogmatic" texts like the *Timaeus*, since both remain part of a consistent story, in his mind, of identification of oneself in a fractured and separate physical world, and a return to the unified realm of intellection and first principles. Simplicius' reception of Presocratic thinkers like Pythagoras – but also Parmenides, *phusiologoi* like Thales, and even later Platonists like his "most authentic student" Xenocrates[15] – contribute to Simplicius' reading of Plato as a highly unified writer with common and consistent purpose and vision throughout his corpus.

IV Simplicius on Misinterpreting Plato

I mentioned above Simplicius' criticism of other interpreters of Plato. Alexander Aphrodisias is a favorite target of his, despite Simplicius' general respect for the Peripatetic, as also is Simplicius' contemporary Philoponus. His criticisms often center around the charge that they are not reading Plato, or sometimes Aristotle, "closely enough," and hence that what appears to be conflict between Plato and Aristotle is in fact a verbal illusion. This strategy often confounds modern readers of Simplicius, who find many of his interpretations overly subtle. But it is worth stating, first – Simplicius' readings, while potentially erroneous, nevertheless are not always so obviously wrong that they do not at least first require some real consideration before rejecting them. And, second – Simplicius' readings of Plato's dialogues were voluminous and impressive – beyond even some contemporary interpreters who approach Plato by focusing only on certain sections of his corpus. Many of the "subtleties" introduced by Simplicius in his interpretation and "harmonization" of Plato and Aristotle thus frequently draw on portions of the dialogues often ignored or forgotten today.[16] For instance, in discussing the postpraedicamenta of the *Categories*, Simplicius makes a rather sophisticated – and extremely useful – comparison with

14 (trans.) Taylor (2011).

15 Cf. *In De Caelo* 12,20.

16 Gerson (2005) provides further examples of Neoplatonic interpretations of the way in which they viewed Aristotle as following Plato, and how many of their views are more sophisticated than they might first appear.

Plato's categorization of types of activity in the *Laws*. The depth and subtlety and the correspondences identified by Simplicius make one in turn pause and reconsider what might otherwise appear, at first blush, to be more "fanciful" readings of Plato. For instance, again referencing the *Laws* (which remember was Plato's final presentation of his philosophy αὐτοπροσώπως for Simplicius), Simplicius spies a precedent and correlate to Aristotelian-style generation and corruption (*in De Caelo* 103,20). Or, more famously, Simplicius, like most Neoplatonists, holds that Plato did not believe in a cosmos generated *in time*, contrary appearances in the *Timaeus* notwithstanding. Simplicius contends, here against both Alexander and Philoponus, that Plato and Aristotle did not in fact disagree substantially on the eternity of the physical world, but rather were operating with different notions of "generation". According to Simplicius, by generation, Plato did not mean wholesale creation in time out of nothing, as it does for Aristotle, but rather the metaphysical dependence of one thing upon another (cf. *in De Caelo* 103.1–107.19; *in Phys.* 1154.3–1156.3). Thus, in stating that the cosmos was generated, in Simplicius' view, Plato in the *Timaeus* is indicating the ontological dependence of the sensible world upon the intelligible realm, but that this is a metaphysical, and not temporal, dependence. The different significations of the word "generation" between the *Timaeus* and the *De Caelo* is thus enough, in Simplicius' mind, to prevent a wholesale contradiction between the two. This certainly would not be the first case in the history of philosophy when just such a verbal difference led to apparent, but superficial, disagreement.

This is such an important point that Simplicius addresses it both in his *De Caelo* and his *Physics* commentaries. Both Plato and Aristotle, Simplicius notes, were involved in the task of describing the whole of the cosmos, including its elemental principles. But whereas Aristotle broke up the problem and treated individual aspects of it in his treatises topic-by-topic, Plato examined them comprehensively in a single treatise.[17] Now this might be bringing a forced reading to Plato's text. Han Baltussen amongst others has suggested that Simplicius' harmonizing tendencies are at least partly understandable in response to a desire to preserve the unity of ancient pagan worldview – and thus the philosophical concordance of the most famous of the pagan philosophers – in light of criticism by Christian contemporaries like Philoponus.[18] Hankinson (2002), 6–8, also lays out several more of what he takes to be Neoplatonic attributions back to Plato, including the ascription of the doctrine of the

17 Cf. *In De Caelo* 4.26–30.

18 Cf. Baltussen (2008), 176–7.

"Aristotelian" fifth element to Plato in the *Timaeus* as well as the five Platonic solids. It should be noted though that Simplicius is also willing to criticize – or at least reserve judgment – on Plato. So for instance at *in Cat.* 351.8–13, Simplicius expresses uncertainty about whether it is Plato or Aristotle who more correctly describes the way in which the soul is the origin and cause of motion – self-moving like Plato thought, or unmoved as according to Aristotle. But while Simplicius' pursuit of harmonization or "affinities" between Plato and Aristotle may have led him to subtle, all-too-subtle interpretations of Plato, his readings nevertheless remain useful. For one way in which an interpretation of an author can be useful, I suggest following Richard Sorabji (1987), 10–11, is insofar that it gives us pause, and forces us to consider the original text anew. Indeed, given what Plato says elsewhere about the relation of the intelligible and the sensible worlds, Simplicius' suggestion about what "generation" means in the *Timaeus* seems neither impossible nor worth ruling out *a priori*. And while ultimately resolving an interpretive point such as this in particular would take much more than the space of this chapter to decide, the value of Simplicius' comments on Plato, I suggest, consists precisely in doing what any helpful interpreter or commentator should do, ancient or contemporary – namely to usefully raise questions and problems for ourselves today in understanding a text. Simplicius' interpretations of Aristotle have long been seen to do exactly that. And the case is the same I believe in his reading of Plato.

V Conclusion

While it would be unsafe to say that Simplicius does not misinterpret Plato at times (indeed, what commentator, ancient or modern, gets an author correct all of the time?), he does serve as an insightful, comprehensive, detailed, at times repetitive, but generally useful companion. Only further analysis into his reading and interpretation of Plato can provide the answers we would need to fully answer that question. But I hope to have given some considerations as to why close attention to how Simplicius reads Plato repays the effort, and why the last Platonist of antiquity should be seen at least as an important partner in our interpretation of Plato today – as he is also seen to be when it comes to Plato's student, Aristotle.

Conclusion

Our journey through the ancient reception of Plato has taken us from the fourth century BCE up to the sixth CE, during which time his writings continued to be studied principally in the original Greek, by native or highly competent speakers. Throughout that time the language had changed little enough in its basic characteristics for them to be able to appreciate, and often also to debate about, many of the original nuances of the text. However, we have met one figure, Augustine, whose ability to appreciate Plato at first hand may be doubted, and whose influence over the western church – and hence over western scholarship – was enormous. Calcidius may have been a native Greek speaker, but he left behind a Latin translation that likewise had enormous influence on how Plato was viewed in the west. Though the role of Plato would inevitably diminish once he could no longer be appreciated for his literary and linguistic merits, in the east he could for a while continue to be seen as a central part of one's intellectual heritage, particularly while a significant number of "pagans" still saw Athens rather than Jerusalem as the fount of the wisdom to which they subscribed. Those most involved in the study of Plato had a strong sense of tradition that guaranteed that Plato would be central to oral intellectual life.

Whatever happened at Athens in 529CE it dealt a severe blow to Platonism by curtailing formal oral discussion of Plato. Even though such discussion may have lived on longer at Alexandria it is clear that it did so less than freely. Platonists with non-Christian names disappear, the *Parmenides* disappears, and along with it so does overt polytheism. Under these restraints the enormous possibilities offered by the text of the dialogues rapidly fated. At different times and in different places Platonic study underwent revivals, but the language of intellectual circles retreated further from its Athenian heritage. Scholarly investigations could not quite recapture the urgency of the questions that were once debated in Platonist schools.

In modern universities that urgency is often rekindled, new traditions of interpreting Plato flourish, thought through in different languages. A clash of traditions can result in the same perplexity that Proclus had experienced when dealing with the earlier interpreters who had seen very different things in the texts from what his teacher Syrianus had found. Our experience of Plato is colored by our own experiences of life and of study, our own assessment of intellectual dangers that confront society, and our own understanding of interlocking "-isms". Plato will forever be that metaphorical swan that flies dangerously close to our hermeneutic nets only to evade them just when we think we have him within our grasp. Our own attempts to interpret will either

be interpreted themselves so as to highlight their deficiencies or quietly forgotten when others cannot follow them.

Here we hope that we shown some of the same problems in operation in antiquity. Most of those we have tackled – though not all – approached the texts with both scholarly and philosophic ability, but their abilities were more inclined to fuel dissension than to remove it. A competitive spirit was also part of their Greek heritage, and they did not readily shy away from debate. In the case of nearly all of them what mattered in the text was what mattered for him or her. It was right, after all, that they should be conscious of whatever they could bring to the understanding of Plato as individuals, and of what contribution they themselves could bring to scholarly debate. Even so, what mattered to the individual might be colored by religious perspectives, childhood experiences, commitment to hermeneutic principles that have become too rigid, and so on. They, like us too, might sometimes have been unaware of how these constraints exercised a hold on their reading. We should not denigrate them for being left with only a partial vision of that flying swan that had been their quarry.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of their work for the modern reader is the conviction with which some of the ancients adhered to positions that we should rapidly dismiss as untenable. Lacking the constraints of modern scholarly tools, and unable to distinguish between genuinely ancient texts and more recent 'forgeries', they worked at a disadvantage as compared with us. Nor did they have the benefit of modern science to constrain their thoughts, and especially their superstitions. They could easily adopt as authoritative guiding voices texts that had become more influential than they deserved, such as the Chaldaean Oracles and the Orphic Rhapsodies. Some realized, often too well, the multi-layered complexities of Plato's texts and slipped too readily into the most fearful hermeneutic mazes. Others reacted against excessive finesse, preferring the direct kind of reading that would probably have appealed to the widest audience.

Not all, however, were so confident in their own readings of Plato. From Cicero until the end of the second century many Platonist texts give the impression of a process of rediscovery in which advances were being made, but much more remained to be discovered. Plutarch could be a little like this, and so too in a later age could Damascius, if in very different ways. Yet it was not their more flexible attitudes that have left their mark on the history of interpreting Plato. Some prefer to go gloriously wrong with Proclus than to be left guessing with Arcesilaus.

There is an obvious lesson to be learned from this: the interpretation of Plato is a work in progress. It always has been, even – or perhaps especially – for those who spoke a Greek close to his own. We must be satisfied if we are able

only to make small steps forward to a moderate consensus on issues where the evidence is in abundance. Like Socrates we must admit that our knowledge is subject to limitations. Nor are these limitations necessarily to be regretted. We must remember that many ancient readers – like many still today – read or listened to the works of Plato for enjoyment, not in order to exercise their hermeneutic skills. Even skillful writers like Lucian were able to employ Plato extensively in their literary work without feeling under any obligation to interpret him and without putting their readers under any obligation to interpret him either. And whereas Plato would have earnestly hoped that his readers would thoughtfully *respond* to his works, it is less clear that he wanted them "interpreted" in any but the blandest sense. After all, it is Plato's own merits, not that of his interpreters, that have guaranteed his survival.

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The following abbreviations are used:

for reference works:

ANRW = *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt.*

DPHA = R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, 1989–, Paris.

RE = *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*.

for journals etc.

AncPhil = *Ancient Philosophy*

AJP = *American Journal of Philology*

CAG = *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*

CMG = *Corpus medicorum graecorum*

CQ = *Classical Quarterly*

GRBS = *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*

HTHR = *Harvard Theological Review*

IJPT = *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition*

JHI = *Journal of the History of Ideas*

JHP = *Journal of the History of Philosophy*

JRS = *Journal of Roman Studies*

MH = *Museum Helveticum*

OSAP = *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*

REG = *Revue des études Grecques*

RHR = *Revue de l'histoire des religions*

StudPhilon = *Studia Philonica Annual*

VCHR = *Vigiliae Christianae*

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General Index

Note: This index is intended to deal principally with matters discussed in the main text. It consists mostly of ancient names (with the names of most dialogues under "Plato"), plus important issues and topics; modern names have usually been included only where an actual quotation (or idea of equivalent status) occurs.

Academy, New 18–27, 58–71, 75, 80, 84, 87–89, 97, 130, 135–138, 186–187
Academy, Old 10–14, 26, 29–45, 61, 68, 335
adiaphora 49, 55–57
Aelianus (Platonist) 154
Aenesidemus 27
Aeschines 47–48
Aetius 110–111
Albinus 94–95, 107–108, 168, 171, 207, 225
Alcinous 5, 96–97, 112, 158, 171–182, 253, 300, 440
allegory 115, 117, 122–125, 186, 194–197, 230–232, 252, 254, 262, 265, 268, 271–272, 276, 279–284, 289, 472–473, 563–568
Allogenes 292, 294, 298–302, 305–308, 361
allusion 76, 79, 98–99, 227, 232, 237, 245–247, 294, 315, 421, 425, 451, 504, 523, 570
Amelius 5, 99, 184–185, 203–204, 254, 261–262, 280–281, 381–399
Ammonius (commentator) 387, 555–556
Ammonius Saccas 5, 99, 184, 203, 252, 258, 279–281, 284, 317–318
Andronicus 27
angels 122–125, 261, 274, 290, 304, 308, 369–370, 374, 453
Animal Itself, Living Animal 258, 322–323, 344, 389, 544
animals 31–32, 38, 122, 199, 211, 220, 289, 303, 322, 386, 397, 412, 466, 483
anonymous *Prolegomena* 11, 70–71, 267–268, 367, 494–495, 518, 533–554
anonymous *Parmenides*-commentator 260, 336, 337, 351–365
anonymous *Theaetetus*-commentator 93, 102–103, 107, 131–132, 136–138, 253, 260, 353–354
Antiochus of Ascalon 20, 25–26, 38, 57, 61, 68, 73–74
Antipater 24, 50–51
Antisthenes 47–48
Apamea 184–185, 383–384, 394
apokatastasis 276–277, 285, 288, 397
aporia 55, 130, 268–269, 353, 384, 389, 517–519, 526–532, 538, 550–551, 574
Apuleius 5, 96, 98, 101, 108, 156–170, 213, 229, 239–241, 253, 441, 455–459
Aquila 264
Arcesilaus 18–24, 59–73, 84, 93
archetype *See* paradigm
Arete (Neoplatonist) 424–425
argument on both sides 59–60, 62, 68–70, 74, 78–79, 517
Aristides 98, 232–236
Aristo 54, 61, 68
Aristobulus 129
Aristotle 3, 13–16, 30, 34–5, 39–43, 58, 72, 74, 96, 113, 139–140, 161, 171, 178–179, 211, 255, 259, 269, 316, 318, 324–326, 338–339, 369–372, 387, 402–403, 407–408, 496, 558–559, 561–562, 572, 574, 579
Aristoxenus 148
Arius Didymus 176, 224
arithmetic 144–148, 153, 396
arithmogeometry 144–145, 147, 153
Arnobius 195, 204
Asclepigenia 428
Asclepius 534, 554
astronomy 88, 94, 147, 149–152, 197–198, 348, 430, 458, 499
Atlantis 103, 194, 281, 513
Atticus (Platonist) 95, 184, 213
auctoritas *See* authority
Augustine 7, 25, 158, 241, 264–265, 448–469
authority (Plato's) 67, 84, 150–151, 155, 187, 241–244, 249, 264, 303, 353, 394, 452–453, 473, 498–514

Autogenes 296–297
Axiothea 416–418

Barbelo Aeon 295–298, 301–303
Bardaisan 271, 285
Beaujeau, J. 156
Beautiful (the) 175, 300
Being–Life–Mind 357, 360–363, 392–393, 481, 513, 562
See also Noetic Triad
Boys-Stones, G. 136, 138
Brahmins 189
Brisson, L. 382–383
Burleigh, J.H.S. 449

Calcidius 264, 433–447
Cancer and Capricorn *See* tropics
Carneades 24, 59, 68–73
categories 10, 173, 259, 338–339, 572
categories of being 305–306
causes 109, 111, 267–268, 444–446, 513, 534, 536–537, 546–554, 571
caves 195–199, 260, 263, 311, 408–409, 460
Celsus (Platonist) 278, 283
Chaldaeans 17, 263, 426–427, 461, 499
Chaldaean Oracles 98–99, 192–193, 198, 201–202, 254, 344, 346, 350, 356, 361, 365, 366, 369, 394, 427–430, 489, 502, 507, 582
Charmadas 24–25, 71, 80
Cherniss, H. 29
Christ 274–275
Christian philosophy 205, 208, 271–291, 349
See also Augustine
Christian-Pagan relations 504, 519–522, 556–558, 563, 568
Chrysippus 54–55, 178
Cicero (Academic allegiance) 4, 24–27, 38–40, 59–64, 67–68, 72–89, 101, 109, 448, 454–455, 459, 468–469
Clea (priestess) 422
Clitomachus 68–70
Clement of Alexandria 183, 248–249, 252, 271–275
cognition 19
of god 140, 273, 300–302
See also epistemology
Colotes 18, 22–23
commentary 5–16, 13, 22, 58–59, 92, 102–104, 108–109, 114, 115, 118, 137–139, 146, 154, 203, 208, 218, 253–254, 259–261, 264–268, 279–284, 336–338, 351–365, 376, 384–389, 393–394, 430, 434–447, 470–485, 486–497, 499–501, 510–511, 516–518, 522–526, 530, 532, 559–568, 569–576
common notions. 512, 557, 563, 567
courage 48, 55, 422–3, 521, 565
Crantor 18–21, 26, 59, 62, 66, 104
Crates (Academic) 20, 62–63
Cratippus 73, 87
Crates (Cynic) 48
creation *See* generation
creator *See* Demiurge
Cronius 99, 195–7, 386
Cupid and Psyche 241
curriculum 58, 101–114, 185, 240, 252, 264, 269, 339, 367–368, 403–404, 489, 491, 500, 510, 514, 515–516, 534, 541–543, 558–560, 563

daimones 174, 261, 281–282, 370, 374–375, 414, 483, 564
as angels 123–124
Latin equivalent 161
Damascius 6, 18, 265, 268–269, 363–364, 387, 429, 473–477, 515–532, 555–556, 559, 561, 563, 582
definition 36
Delphi 93, 132
Delphic inscription 337, 491, 532, 547
Demiurge(s) 19, 49–50, 134, 208–22, 254, 259–260, 312–315, 321–322, 339–340, 385, 440, 452–456,
as bodily creator 221–222
as builder 218–219
as supreme planner 219–221
as triad 389–390, 392
Democritus 105, 113
Dercyllides 154
dialectic 13, 30–32, 37–39, 63–66, 69–71, 75, 171–173, 271–272, 307–310, 491, 494, 506–508, 526, 540, 563, 565, 575–576

dialogues
as microcosm 543–551
dialogue-form 2, 4, 10, 26, 47, 66–71, 92, 94, 99, 101, 116, 117–118, 540–554
written by imitators 73–79, 84, 87, 101, 116, 132, 230, 236
Dianoia 34
Dicaearchus 11, 18, 417
diction 119, 493, 535
Dillon, J. 29, 118, 156, 169
Dio Chrysostom 5, 98, 225–259
Diogenes Laertius 99, 108, 110
Diogenes of Sinope 48
Dion (friend of Plato) 141
Diotima 1, 173, 263–264, 285, 300–302, 411–414, 418, 422–424, 428–432, 500
divination 412–414, 427, 430
See also prophecy
doctrines, unwritten 3
Dodds, E.R. 201
Dörrie, H. 156
doxography 92, 108–13
dramatic reception 14, 64, 66, 77, 86, 266, 317, 487–489, 509–510, 570
Dyad, Indefinite 3, 255, 320, 327–329, 576

Egyptians 189, 196, 348–349, 386
elements 124, 161, 174, 212, 216, 303, 341–344, 507
elenchus 78
embryo 213–214
Empedocles 103–104, 273
Epicrates 30–32
Epictetus 572–573
Epicurus 22, 113, 168
Epicureans 187, 278, 537
epistemology 19, 21–25, 44, 49, 69, 76–77, 107, 134–136, 207, 258, 261, 278, 280–283, 307, 332, 446–447, 451
epopteia 133, 263, 290, 350, 381, 502
Eriugena 271, 291
Eros 63, 162, 241, 247, 263, 413–414, 483, 487–488, 526
erudition 160–163
esotericism 115, 120, 200
Eudemus 35
Eudorus 19, 92, 104, 110–113, 147, 358–359, 362
Eunapius 366, 382, 385, 426–31
Eurydice 421–422
Eusebius 116, 252, 272, 278–279
Evagoras 264
Evagrius 252, 271, 288–291
evil 56, 128, 141, 169, 194, 202, 241, 258, 284, 286, 328–329, 342–346
exegetical principles 94, 104, 112, 114, 146–151, 208, 252, 262, 267, 276, 282, 318, 353, 398, 437–438, 441, 443, 447, 477, 484–485, 505–508, 534, 540–541, 551, 557–558, 563–568

fate 109, 176, 181, 346–349, 437–441, 499
Ficino 496
final cause 43, 268, 536–7, 546, 553
Forms (Platonic) *See* Ideas (Platonic)
free will 346–349, 285
freedom 226, 285–6

Gaius (Platonist) 94, 168, 207
Galen 5, 97–98, 108, 206–222, 244–245
Gellius 101
generation
ex nihilo 342
instantaneous 343–345
of world 174–177
temporal or non-temporal 87, 133–134, 177, 339–344, 445–446, 524, 578
geometry 15, 34–35, 95, 345, 395–396, 433, 458, 507–508, 536
See also arithmogeometry
Gnostics 6, 94, 98, 189, 202, 222, 258, 273, 276, 293, 384
Sethian Gnosticism 99, 292–315, 360–61
Goal *See telos*
Good (the) 175, 188–193, 268, 302, 320–321, 326–329, 387, 452, 455
Gorgias 82
Greatest Kinds 329–332
Gregory Nyssen 252, 274, 285–290

Hadot, P. 58, 360–361
handbooks (of doctrine) 5, 59, 65, 92, 144, 147–148, 166, 169, 171–182, 403, 448–450
happiness 40–43, 48, 50–51, 112–13, 141, 163, 226, 256, 337, 410, 420–21, 459–60
harmonics 112, 6, 19, 145–149, 153–154, 423

Harpocration 94
Heaven and Earth 254, 483–484
Hegel 316, 318
Heraclides 10
Heraclitus 196, 198
hermeneutics *See* exegetical principles
Hermetic Corpus 99, 188, 202
Hermias 6, 266, 269, 471, 486–497, 520
Hermodorus 10, 345
Hesiod 227, 254, 282, 284, 434, 489
Herophilus 179
Hierocles of Alexandria 184–185
Homer 98, 111–112, 194–197, 226–228, 236, 241, 254, 260, 276, 281–282, 402, 421, 473, 489, 507
homoiôsis theôi *See telos*
Hunayn Ibn Ishaq 207
Hypatia 6, 414, 429–431, 520
Hypostases 190, 193, 200, 258, 278, 323, 260, 267, 319–324, 345, 369, 439–441, 476, 479–480, 524, 562, 564

Iamblichus 6, 185, 204, 261, 265, 366–380, 396–399, 403, 424–428, 480, 516, 576
Iamblichus' canon *See* curriculum
Ideas (Platonic) 19, 109, 111, 134–135, 173, 274–275, 320–321, 329–330, 451, 454–455
in mind of god 111, 135, 271, 274, 455,
Ideas of evil things 388
indifferents *See adiaphora*
innatism 93, 526, 530–532
intellect, intelligence 34, 111, 122, 175–177, 192–193, 213, 216, 256, 274, 287, 289–290, 321, 387, 440, 525
See also hypostases
intelligible world 133, 165, 242, 258–259, 303–305, 330–334, 339, 342, 348, 374–378, 438, 451, 473, 478, 522–525, 560, 578
introductions to Plato's works 105–108
Invisible Spirit *See* Unknowable One
irony, Socratic 116
Isidore 268, 520–522
Isocrates 2, 82

Jerome 116, 468
Jewish thought 93, 98, 115–129, 189, 194, 271
Josephus 116
Julian (Emperor) 6, 257, 263–264, 385, 400–410, 425
Justin Martyr 99, 224, 248, 271–272

Kalyptos 295–297, 305, 308
kathêkonta 53, 64–66
knowledge *See* epistemology; self-knowledge; wisdom

Lasthenia 416, 418
Latin language 75–76, 87, 161, 229, 239–241, 264, 350, 433–435, 442–447, 448
literary reception 1, 10, 47, 68, 77, 92, 96, 98–99, 101, 157, 163–167, 223–249, 422, 492, 511, 518, 534, 542–545, 547, 550, 565–566, 568, 581, 583
lives
theoretical and practical 16, 41–43, 82–83, 93, 139–141
Lévy, C. 89
Libanius 382, 401
Living Being *See* Animal Itself
logos 248, 252, 271–280, 291, 304, 313, 342–344, 421, 488
Long, A.A. 63
Longinus 193, 280, 384
Longus 99, 245–248
Lucian 5, 98, 101, 236–239
Lydus 186

Macrobius 195, 350
Magi 189, 227, 230
Mangey, T. 117
Mansfeld, J. 58, 110
Marcella 424
Marcionites 273, 276
Marcus Aurelius 5, 93
Marinus 498–499, 534
Marius Victorinus 360–361
Marsanes 292, 307–308
mathematics 5, 13, 33–35, 87, 94, 142, 143–155, 347, 424, 429–430
mathematical objects 34–35
Matter 10, 15–16, 19, 111, 161, 178, 202, 209–217, 220, 222, 258–260, 305, 312–314, 327–330, 340–346,

374–375, 437–441, 466–469, 536, 539, 546–547, 576
as great and small 3
creation of 342
not a principle 345
See also receptacle; indefinite dyad
Maximus of Tyre 98, 225, 229, 241–243, 442
Mazur, Z. 294
McCabe, M.M. 15–16
Melite 426
Methodius 285
midwifery (Socratic) 106, 267, 491, 438, 540
Mithraism 98, 194, 196–198, 203, 256
Moderatus of Gades 93–94, 144, 342, 345, 351, 358–359
monad 143–147, 294, 356
Mosaic law 115, 129
Moses 115–119, 123, 125, 129, 183, 248, 271–273, 273, 282
mystagogy 255–256, 258, 263
mysteries 187, 194–196, 221, 256, 272, 335, 414, 424, 426, 500–502, 507
mystic elements 186–187
myth 108, 121, 180, 186, 193–199, 227–228, 230–231, 235, 247, 253, 260–261, 266, 268, 272, 277, 280–284, 287–288, 303, 311–312, 318, 334, 406, 408–409, 422, 446–447, 480–483, 486, 492–494, 501–502, 505–508, 523, 548, 557–558, 560, 563, 571
Myth of Er 149–150, 154, 181, 260, 337, 347–9, 463–464
music 119, 143–155, 166, 239–240, 423, 429, 433, 535

necessity 216
Nemesius 184, 347, 349, 386
Nicomachus of Gerasa 144–147, 155
Nigidius Figulus 86–87
Noetic Triad 293, 297
See also Being-Life-Mind
novels 162–163, 240–241, 245–248
number 84, 103, 143–148, 262, 291, 356, 394–398, 419–420, 507–508, 513, 535
number of souls 180–181
number symbolism 262, 394–398
Numenius 5, 97–99, 131, 176, 184–205, 212–213, 252, 257–258, 262, 264, 271, 281, 345, 383–384, 394, 436–437, 439–440

O'Brien, C. 210
Odysseus 197, 199
Olympiodorus 6, 268, 556–568, 473–475
One, the 3, 256, 274, 318–321, 356–363, 392, 526–532
One in us 531–532
One-Many problem 324–325
Three Ones 93
Unknowable One 294–298
See also hypostases
orality 186, 189
oral doctrine 186, 258, 317, 496, 541
oral record of lectures 170, 499, 516
See also unwritten doctrines
oratory *See* rhetoric
Origen 6, 99, 199, 252, 271–285, 257
Orphic tradition 254, 390, 394, 474, 480, 489, 502, 507, 582
Osius 434–436

Panaetius 24, 51–53, 207
paradigm
didactic 263, 422, 428, 431–432, 549–550
idea-paradigms 19, 109, 111, 274, 295, 328, 340, 388, 397
of human being 288
universal 215–216, 313–314, 323, 342–345
paradigmatic cause 267–268, 536–537, 546, 550–551, 571
parhypostasis 342
pederasty 120, 124
Peisitheos 387
Perictione 420
Peripatetics 4, 18, 26, 39, 44, 61–62, 87, 111, 132, 160–161, 168, 243, 278, 316, 537, 577
Phaedo of Elis 47–48
Phanes 254, 390, 394
Philip of Opus 3, 11–12, 174
Philo, of Alexandria 4–5, 93, 101, 115–129, 178, 219
Philo, of Larissa 25–26, 69–70, 73, 80
Philodemus 22–23

Philoponus 95, 496, 556, 568, 574, 577–578
philosopher-rulers 263, 400–409, 420, 422
Philostratus 158, 226, 234
planets 149, 153, 198, 374, 398
Plato *passim*
Alcibiades I 16, 29, 63, 95, 102, 252, 287, 337, 367, 403, 489, 491, 499–501, 510, 516, 542–543, 545, 553, 558–563, 573
Alcibiades II 29
Apology 16, 491, 540
Charmides 23, 52–53, 70, 227, 337, 539, 550–551
Clitophon 226
Cratylus 16, 18, 76, 252, 336, 367, 489, 499–502, 505, 511–512, 543, 558
Epinomis 3, 12, 29, 94, 96, 145, 151–152, 174, 226
Epistles 29, 76, 83, 109, 239, 254, 258, 260, 263, 319, 359, 390, 401, 494, 505, 510,
Euthydemus 21–22, 48, 51–56, 78, 234, 570, 576
Euthyphro 23, 70, 194
Gorgias 25, 27, 48, 55–56, 76, 78–84, 95, 226, 233–234, 238–239, 252, 266, 268, 303, 367, 404, 489, 493, 500, 505, 507, 543, 548, 552, 558, 560–561, 564, 566–568, 570
Laches 48, 55
Lysis 22–23, 70, 227, 538–539, 550–551
Menexenus 76, 234, 403, 405
Meno 3, 13, 15–16, 37, 44, 48, 51, 76, 95, 179–180, 412–414, 421
Parmenides 16, 76, 93–95, 105, 173, 252, 256, 258, 260, 265, 292, 295, 301, 305–307, 318–321, 336–337, 351–365, 367–371, 379, 387–394, 419–420, 471–471, 477–479, 485, 499–508, 512–513, 516 522, 530, 542–543, 558, 560, 574, 581
Phaedo 13, 18, 24, 37, 44, 95, 96, 103, 121, 126–128, 132–133, 167, 174, 179, 192, 201, 239, 247, 265, 268, 285, 289, 304, 309–312, 335–336, 367, 381, 403–404, 417, 421, 425, 462–464, 473–477, 485, 493, 499–500, 516, 518, 537, 542–543, 552, 558, 560, 570
Phaedrus 1–2, 13, 18, 23–26, 37, 72, 76, 79, 81, 119, 121, 124, 128, 132–133, 161, 167, 169, 172–173, 180, 225–235, 241, 245–247, 254, 258, 261,266, 274, 292, 301, 303, 310–311, 346, 367–368, 379, 425, 471, 483, 487–497, 500, 505, 508, 510, 523, 526, 532, 541–543, 547, 549, 558, 570 -571
Philebus 15–16, 112–113, 209, 258, 268, 307, 319, 336–337, 367, 381, 387, 473, 479, 484, 485, 489, 500, 505, 516–517, 424–525, 542–3, 553, 558, 560, 570
Protagoras 2, 21, 48, 54–55, 76, 84, 227, 408, 505, 507, 570
Republic 13–18, 27, 29, 34–35, 44, 51–3, 76, 94, 97, 104, 112–113, 121, 143, 145–146, 149, 151–154, 167, 172–173, 176, 196, 226–227, 230, 236, 241, 252–254, 258, 260, 263, 266, 280, 303, 309, 311, 315, 319–320, 336, 346, 348, 385–386, 392, 397, 400–405, 408–410, 412, 417, 421, 425, 428, 431, 437, 453, 464, 467–468, 489, 493, 499–501, 505, 507, 513, 516, 535, 549, 556, 567, 570, 575
Sophist 16, 32, 44, 76, 252, 258, 292, 305–309, 315, 323, 325, 329, 331, 336, 367, 489, 500, 505, 508, 516, 543, 552, 558, 560, 570
Statesman 16, 32, 44, 102, 121, 234, 252, 307, 367, 404, 407, 409, 489, 500, 505, 507, 543, 558, 570–571
Symposium 1, 15, 21, 95, 103, 121, 132–133, 138, 161, 167, 231, 245, 247, 252, 266, 284–285, 292, 300–302, 335, 367–368, 374, 379 , 403, 413, 424–429, 432, 468, 481, 483, 486, 489–490, 500, 505, 526, 543, 558, 570
Theaetetus 16, 21, 23, 49, 63, 70, 76, 103, 112–113, 121, 136, 139, 173, 224, 334, 367, 388–389, 460, 500, 530, 539, 542, 543, 558
Theages 29, 63
Timaeus passim
Plotinus 5–6, 57, 176, 185, 257–259, 293, 297, 316–335, 336, 345–346, 383–384, 459, 465, 522–523
Plutarch (of Athens) 264, 355, 360, 391, 428, 498–499

Plutarch (of Chaeronea) 5, 74, 93, 95, 98, 101, 104, 130–142, 151–153, 213, 229–232, 420–422
poets 193, 227, 230–231, 247, 253, 281–282, 369, 452, 467–468, 507, 535, 542
Polemo 13, 20–21, 62–65, 496
politics 79–84
Porphyry 6, 17, 99, 184, 203, 235, 259–261, 264, 336–350, 383–384, 398–399, 436, 460–466
Posidonius 26–27, 57, 92, 103, 110
Potamo of Alexandria 104
practice of death 127
Praxiphanes 17–18
principles
  number of 161, 216–217
Proclus 6, 17–19, 95, 193, 254, 264, 316, 340, 348–350, 355, 381–383, 397–399, 470–474, 477–485, 489, 493, 496, 498–514, 516–530, 532, 539, 545, 548, 550, 558–559, 561, 564, 581, 582
proems (of dialogues) 64–66
procession 293, 357, 371, 395, 397, 478–479
Protophanes 295–297
providence 109, 161, 175, 191, 214–215, 278, 312–313, 346–349, 397, 438–441, 462, 499, 537
Pseudo-Dionysius 264
Pseudo-Plutarch *On Fate* 109–110, 176, 439
psychic triad 392
psychology 177–181, 287–291, 370–379, 522–524
  See also soul
Ptolemais 423–424
Pythagoras 84–85, 93, 105, 108, 112, 116, 152, 187, 205, 255, 257, 402–403, 489, 495, 577
Pythagoreans 72, 92, 103–105, 114, 123, 183, 186, 196, 201, 203, 345, 359–362, 388, 394, 398, 411, 416–427, 457–458, 507, 535–537, 576

Quintilian 75

receptacle (in *Timaeus*) 15–16, 19, 178–179, 216, 305, 313, 327–328, 339, 392, 466
recollection, theory of 37, 85, 137, 179, 309, 421, 451
Regen, F. 156
reincarnation 117, 120–22, 124–128
reversion 293, 357, 395, 397–398, 517, 527–528
rhetoric 79–84, 158, 163–165, 218, 225–259, 232–244, 401–406, 487–489, 520–521, 552, 558–60
Runia, D. 110, 117–118, 123–124, 219
Rutilius Rufus 84

Saffrey, H.-D. 391–393
Schofield, M. 79
satire 21, 61, 98, 236–239
second sophistic 98, 199, 223–249
Sedley, D. 58–59, 64
self-knowledge 49, 52–53, 337, 491–492, 519, 532, 540, 543, 563–564
Seneca 101, 109
Severus (Platonist) 95, 103, 154
Sextus Empiricus 60–61, 103, 109
Simon (Socratic) 2
Simplicius 269, 371–372, 496, 569–579
skepticism 25, 38, 72–73, 93, 130–131, 267, 532, 537–540
  metaphysical 135–138
Skeptics, Academic 4, 58–73
Skeptics, Pyrrhonian 60
skopos 253–4, 266–268, 280, 338, 358, 387, 398, 486–9, 510–513, 522, 534–535, 542–543, 546, 551–553, 567, 572
Socrates 20, 22–23, 44, 47–49, 62–63, 70, 72, 82–85, 112, 119, 129, 186–187, 190, 240–241, 246–247, 266–269, 389, 453, 457–458, 490–492, 496, 517–522, 526–532, 533, 535, 537–539, 573–576
  his *daimonion* 168, 240, 241, 564
Sophia 313–315
sophists 96, 98, 156–159, 225–229, 239–241, 306, 521, 549–552
  See also second sophistic
Sosipatra 263–264, 426–428
soteriology 196, 205, 283, 518
soul
  as principle of motion 322
  descent into incarnation 125–127, 180–181, 258, 310–312, 348, 370, 523
  immortality of 215, 451
  transmigration of 199, 277, 279, 310–312, 386, 421, 436, 451, 523,

tripartition of 117, 207, 288, 451, 459, 566
undescended 258–259, 332–334, 373, 522
See also hypostases; psychology
Speusippus 2, 4, 12–13, 15, 26, 29–38, 43–55, 356, 496
Sterling, G.E. 128
Stobaeus 111–113, 348
Stoics 4, 21–24, 61, 69, 87, 113, 168, 171, 178, 218, 227, 316, 537
Strato 18
style 83–84, 119, 156, 165–166, 186, 191–192, 195, 226–229, 236, 240, 242, 245, 434, 535, 546–553
suspension of judgement 23, 60
symbolic interpretation 161, 194–198, 262, 265–268, 272–273, 280, 282, 284, 386, 394–398, 477–481, 484, 490, 506–507, 518, 566
Synesius 401, 430
Syrianus 6, 264–265, 355, 382–383, 395, 470–85, 498–499

Tarrant 169, 195
Taurus (Platonist) 95, 101, 165, 180, 340
taxonomy 31, 38
telos in ethics 41–45, 51–53, 97, 111–113, 140–141, 174, 183, 188, 224–225, 241, 255–257, 268, 285–286, 334, 337, 402, 558
Tertullian 249, 264, 467–8
Theano 418–420, 422
Themistius 400–401, 406–407, 417
Theodore of Asine 6, 203, 261–262, 381–382, 385–399
theology 50, 93, 97, 133–4, 140–41, 173–6, 190–93, 218, 243, 267–8, 356–357, 477–479, 501–506
Theon of Smyrna 5, 94, 107, 143–55
Theophrastus 17–18, 26, 62, 64
theurgy 192, 261, 366, 368, 373–375, 379, 426–431, 502, 504, 560
Thrasyllus 92, 105–107, 148
Thrasymachus 82
Thucydides 1
Timoxena 420–421
translation 76, 84–88, 442–447, 454
Triple Power 297–299, 306
tropics 197, 396
True Earth 303–304
Tübingen school 14

unwritten doctrines 13, 16, 76, 255, 317–318, 345, 486, 494–496, 541, 576

Valentinians 276, 396
vice 46, 48, 49, 56, 125, 141, 289, 327–329, 335, 521
Virgil 463–464
virtues 41–42, 48–57, 63, 68, 88, 117, 140–141, 167, 174, 241, 268, 277, 285–290, 328–329, 334–335, 385–386, 404–410, 412, 420–426, 450, 460, 465, 469, 487–488, 521, 534, 542–545, 549, 553, 557–560, 563–567, 572
as knowledge 49, 54–55
in Panaetius 51–52
levels of 174, 268, 335, 404, 424–426, 465, 521, 542, 558–563, 572
of women 386
sufficient for happiness 51
unity of 49, 53–55

Westerink, L.G. 522
Winston, D. 118
women in Plato 412–414, 422–423
women readers 263–264, 411–432
World-Soul 19, 49–50, 176–177, 213–214, 342, 395–397
writing 494–496, 541

Xenarchus 110–111
Xenocrates 2, 4, 13–15, 26, 29–31, 38–45, 104, 109, 496, 577
Xenophon 47

young gods 97, 175, 209–212, 453, 469

Zeno (of Citium) 20–21, 26, 47, 63–65
zodiac 348
Zostrianos 292, 294–295, 303–315, 361, 384

Index Locorum

This index is intended to cover the principal passages discussed in the text; for Platonic dialogues see also General Index.

Alcinous
Did.
1.152.8–12 159
6.159.39–41 172
9.163.25 173
10.164.277 175
10.164.40–165.4 176
11.166.35–12.167.12 176
12.167.8–15 175
14.169.16–170.20 172
15.171.20–23 177
15.171.15–20 174
17.173.5–15 177–178
25.178.2–11 179–180
25.177.21–31 172

Anon. *Post. Analytics.*
584.17–585.2 36

Anon. *Proleg.*
1.22–29 538
1.29–38 533
2.33–35 535
3.12 535
3.25 538
4.10 536
5.35–41 537
6.1–7 535
6.8–13 533
6.14–18 535
8.3–8 537
8.4–14 536
10.1–11.20 70–71
10.8 539
10.19 539
10.26–43 539
10.44–45 539
11.1–13 540n35
13.18–23 541
13.8 541
15.1–50 544
15.46–50 544n45
16.19–29 547n49
17.33–39 546
20.10–15 548n51
24.13–19 11
26.10–34 367

Anon. *Tht.*
4.17–23 64
2.11–39 103
54.39–55.13 136
70.5–26 138

Apuleius
Apol.
10.6 158
36.6 162
64.3 158
DDS
20.165–166 167
Flor.
2.1 158
7.9–10 159, 164
9.33 164
20.12 240
Metamorphoses
10.33 162
de Mundo
1.2889–23.341 160
24.341–38.374 160
de Platone
1.1.182–183 166
1.2.185 167
1.5 456, 466
1.5.190–1.6.193 161
1.7.194–8.198 161
2.8.231 164

Aristotle
De Caelo
1.10 15
1.12–2.1 15

NE
I. 1 1094a26–28 407
I.7 1098a7–18 41
X.4 1174b33 113
X.6 1177a1–2 41
X.6 1177b33 16
Metaph.
A 6, 987a29–988a17 320
Λ 7, 1071b19–20 325
Phys.
209b11–2 3
209b14–15 3, 13
Pol.
1265a10–12 14
1286b22–27 407
1287a3, 21–22 407
1325b22–23 407
Topics
II.6 112a32–38 42

Aristides
20 234
52 234

Asclepius of Tralles
Comm. On Nicomachus of Gerasa's Introduction to Arithmetic
1.43–5 388

Augustine
Acad.
3.17.38 61
De baptism
VI, 17–18 453
Ciu. Dei
VIII, 4 453–454
VIII, 12 449
VIII, 13 453
VIII, 8 452
VIII, 11 467
VIII, 14 455, 468
IX, 16 453
X, 29 461–462
X, 30 462, 466
X, 32 461
XI, 21 452
XIII, 18 454
XIV, 19 451
C. Iul. Imperf.
VI, 22 468
De Trin.
XIV, 14–24 451
De uera relig.
II, 2 449
III, 3 449–450
V, 8 449

Chaldean Oracles
F 3 193
F 7 192, 193
F 8 192
F 13 192
F 22 192
F 36 192
F 37 192, 194
F 109 192

Cicero
Ac.
1.13 61, 62
1.15–42 25, 26
1.41 63
1.44 61
1.45 62
1.46 26, 61, 62
2.7 61
2.8–9 67
2.8 71, 75
2.13 55
2.15 68
2.16 68
2.72 62
2.74 26
2.77 63
2.99–101 79
Academica Posteriora
4.17 38–39
de fin.
1.6 77
1.7 86
1.16 85
2.2 59
2.3 78n38
3.4 83n68
5.87 85

de off.
I 3–4 83
I 11–14 51
I 13 52
I 110–11 53n26
II 8 61
II 46 52
De nat. de
1.10 67
1.11 61. 68
de or.
1.47 80
1.85 81
3.60–61 81
3.59–61 81, 82
De orat.
3.67 59, 63
5.1 60
3.67 67
de re pub.
I 16 459
Tusc. Disp.
2.4 61
5.9 39

Calcidius
Ep. ad Os.
132.8–9 434
132.8–11 442
132.11–12 435
132.20–134.2 442
In Tim.
2, 204.1–21 442
6, 206.29–208.3 437
6, 208.7–8 438
23, 230.6–19 445
133, 370.12 435
137, 374.10–15 440
149, 384.19–20 439
174, 406.12 441
176, 408.14–20 438
188 441
268–355 438
269, 498.17–20 439
270, 500.1–2 439
342, 568.19–25 447

Clement
Strom.
1.8.42.1 273
1.22.150.4 273
4.25.155.2–156.2 274–275
5.11.73–74.2 271
5.9.56 273
6.5.41.6–7 273

Codex Bruce
237.20–23 306n25
242.24–253.2 295n7

Codex Justinianus
1.11.9–10 562n39

Damascius
In Parm.
I 1.20–12.5 524
III 15.1–5 523
In Phlb.
I 244 480
In Phd.
1.138 559–560
8.2.1–20 560
34 518–519
PA
I 1 527
I 6.7–16 531
I 8.12–19 528–529
I 84.8–12 528
II 154.14–17 528
PH
5a,b,c 520, 522
6a 520
36a 521
150.5 519
116e 519n13

Dio
Orations
36 227–229

D. L.
3.51 73
3.45 535
3.46 416
3.48–66b 105–107
4.1 12
4.17–19 63
4.21 63
4.32 59, 62
4.4–5 12

4.28 63
7.47 63
7.107 64
7.125 55
7.147 46, 49n18
7.171 66
24.11 12

Eudorus
Anthology
2.7.2 111

Eunapius
VS
469 427

Eusebius
HE
2.4.3 116
PE
14.6 60

Eriugena
Per.
5.987c 291

Evagrius
KG
6.51 289
89.4 288
Praktikos
1 290
52 289
78 290

Galen
De foetuum formation
IV.700–701K 213–214
De optimo medico cognoscendo
9.6 244
PHP
IX, V.791–2 K 214–215
IX.8, V.789K 212
QAM
4.42 M 211
UP
1.8, III.16K 211
17.1, IV 358K 220

Gregory
De oratione
256.19 286
H.Cant
6.160.17–161.1 286
10 287
15 287–288
Hom. Op.
8 287

Hermias
In Phdr.
12.18–13.5 487
17.1 520
37b-c 521
116e 521
219.8–18 488–489
271.10–18 495

Hieronymus
Adversus Jovinianum
II, 7 468

Iamblichus
De Anima
6, 30.12–13 370–371
7, 30.14–23 371
48, 72.7–8 371
De Myst.
2.11, 96.13–97.2 366–367
In Sophistam
F 1.1–2 367
In Parm.
F 2 369–370
In Tim.
F 50–52 376
F 54–56 377

Jerome
De viris illustribus
11.7 116

Julian
Ad Cynicos
4, 185a-b 402
6, 185c 402
Ad Constantium II
15, 68c 405

Hymn to the Sun
5, 133a 408
Misopogon
25, 353d-354a 409
25, 354b 409
Ad Themistium
2, 254b 406
2, 255c 406
4, 356c 406
5, 257d 406
7, 260d 407
7, 261a 407
8, 261d-262 407
10, 263c 407
10, 263d-264a 407

Longus
Daphnis et Chloe
1.22.4 246
2.7.1 246–247
2.8.3 247

Malalas, John
Chronicle
18.47 515n2

Marinus
Vit. Proc.
28.12–15 428

Maximus
Oration
11 242–243

NHC
F 21 295
Allogenes
XI 48.29–49.1 297
XI 45.22–30 298n17
XI 45.6–68 302
XI 48.15–17 298n17
XI 49.5–26 298n17
XI 50.8–17 308–309
XI 55.17–30 306
XI 60.14–61.22 299
XI 61.22–31 300
XI 64.14–36 310
Apocryphon of John
II 12.33–13.5 313
Eugnostos
III 72.10–11 293n3
III 74.21–75.12 293n3
Marsanes
X 4.24–5.21 307
Zostrianos
VIII 116.1–6 295
VIII 81.6–20 298n17
VIII 117.1–14 305
VIII 23.6–17 308
VIII 2.25–3.13 308n27
VIII 44.1–46.31 311
VIII 48.3–26 304

Nemesius
De nat. hom.
c.43 347

Numenius
Fr. 1a 186–187
Fr.1b 189
Fr. 2.2 192
Fr. 2.11 188
Fr. 2.17–19 188
Fr. 2.22–3 188
Fr.5 190
Fr. 6.6 190
Fr.11.13–14 190
Fr.11–18-19 192
Fr.12.21–2 192
Fr. 13 190
Fr.13.19 192
Fr. 17 192
Fr. 17.4 190
Fr. 20.12 190
Fr. 22 191
Fr. 24.8 187
Fr.24.12–18 187
Fr.25.57 186
Fr. 32.6 197
Antr.
7.1 197
9.1 197
28.11 198
14.14 198
18.19 201
34.1–8 198

Olympiodorus
In Alc.
1.3–24 558–559
1.6–7 559
7.9–8.5 563–564
In Gorg.
0.8 566
27.2 567
29.2 566
34.3 567
35.3 567
In Phd.
8.2.1–20 559
I 10.3.19–4.1 474
I 207.3–9 475
I 207.9–16 476
I 202 476

Origen
CC
I 15 189
4.39 283
PE
11–13 279
Princ.
1.3.1 278
4.2.9 282

Perictione
On Wisdom
689.2–3 420

Philo
Contempl.
57–64 120
Det.
27 128
Gig.
6–18 122–125
Her.
181 119
Prob.
13 119
Spec.
2.240 119
de virtutibus
187–227 125
203–205 125
205 125–126

Philoponus
De aeternitate mundi
VI.8, 148.7–15 340

Plato
Alcibiades I
129b-130c 287
129a2–130d1 573
132d-133c 563
133c 337
Apology
25d 526
33b 540
Charmides
161b 52
164d-169c 337
Epinomis
984d-985c 173
Epistulae
II 258
III 239
VII 239, 260
324a-326a 83
341c5 494
344c4 494
Euthy.
280d-e 51, 55
282d2-e5 55
Grg.
457a5–6 82
463a-465c 233, 234
467e-468b 55–56
480b9-c3 83
485d 162
491e-492c 565
495a 565
501c 565
505d-506c 565
515b-517a 82
525c2 2 83
Laches
196d 55
199c7-d1 55

Leg.
709b7-c1 406
713c4–714a8 406
715e-716a 112, 172
716c 409
716e-717a 460
728a4–5 406
729b5-c1 409
730d2-e2 408
770c-d 412
804d-e 412
813e-814c 412
857c 11
858b-c 11
897b 177, 460
Menexenus
247e7–248a3 405
Meno
80a-82a 37
81a10-b1 414
86b6–7 180
88c 51
Parm.
132b-v 134
137c-142a 295
137c-143a 337
137b-150b 173
137c-160b 93
141a5 352n3
142b5–6 324
143a9 354
155e4–156a4 369
155e-157b 322
156d 95
157c2–160b1 94
Phd.
62b 194
65c-d 287
66b-67b 462
67a 287
67d-e 124 474
68b8-c3 334
69c 460
69e6–70c5 474
70b2–4 474
70c 463
70e4 474
71d14-e2 474
71e9 474
72a12-b5 476
72b4–5 474
72c5-d3 474
72d-76e 37
76a1–4 37n29
79d 287
80b 172
80e 124, 287
81d 312
82a10-b3 335
82b 96
82e 464
83a-b 312
83b 287
83d 312, 425
108b 312
109e-111c 304
111c-114c 197
113e2 283
Phdr.
227a-230e 227
229e5–230a1 491
229a-230b 231–232
230a 532
230d-237a 227
237a9 493
241d-242d 227
242a 227
242d 483
243e-257b 235
244a 231
244a-245b 234
245b 425
245c5 26
245c-246a 490
245d 287
245e 179
246a 180, 494
246b 322n24
246a-256e 523
246a3–257a2 368
246a-254e 225, 227
247b 180, 386
246c 271, 284, 460
247a-243d 119
247e 180
248a 172, 312

248c 284, 312n30
248e-249a 124
249c 309n28
249d6 246
253c 493
255d 246
256e-257c 227
257d-258d 494
258e 495
258d-262d 119
259a-d 492
264c 266, 488, 510
265a 231
265d-266b 243, 309, 310
274c-275c 230, 492
275c 494
277d7 494
278b 494
278c4 494
Philebus
23c 524
27b-28c 209
27d7 524
30d 209
64a7–65a5 479
66a6-c7 112
Plt.
259a-b 408
259c-e 407
262–266a 32
286a 37n28
287a 272
301b-d 407
Prot.
331a-b 55
322c 408
329c-332a 54–55
Rep.
377a-383c 536n11
378b-380c 453
387e-388a 421
410b-511a 173
433a4–6 53n28
433c 187
452a 412
467d-e 405
473c-d 400
485c3–10 52
486a9–10 52
491b 407
496b-d 407
498–499d 407
501b1–4 407
503d-506c 567
505a2 188
508b6–7 326
508b12-c2 408
509b8–9 325
509d-511c 447
508e5–509a5 326n40
509d-511e 34–35, 307, 309
514a-517d 408, 460
533d 447
546a 287
564a 280
588c 567
598a7 337
613a-b 112
614b-621d 347
614c-615e 197
615e3 283
616b2–617b8 149
617e 181, 285, 346, 460
618a 348
619b7-d1 334
620a2–3 348
Sph.
221e-222d 32
235d-236b 315n35
238c 306
240b1–13 307
248d8-e4 325
247d10-e4 46
248e 258
248e-249b 297n16, 323n28
252d-20 331
253d-e 308, 309
254b7 329
254d 307, 323n29, 331n58
Symp.
178a-212c 301–302
188a 425
188d 465
191a-d 247
201d3–5 414
201d-212c 412

201e 247n105
202e 124, 483
202e-203a 161, 368
203b-e 283
206b 414
210c-d 173
210e-211d 300, 300n2
211a-d 301n21
212a2–7 325n41
212b1–4 413
Tht.
143d1–5 354
150c4 136, 491
151a6-b1 530
151b2 532
176a7–8 388
176a-b 119
176b 16, 85, 88, 112, 183, 224, 256, 286, 426, 460, 465, 560, 563
176a5-c5 334
191a-196c 49
Tim.
17a-27d 86
18c 412
30a3 87
27d-28a 109, 190
27d5–29c3 447
27d-47b 76
28a2–3 446
28a-b 452
28b7 340
28c 174, 191, 209, 218, 259, 287
28f 281
29b1 444
29b2 443, 445
29c3 446, 447
29d7–47e2 315
29d-30c 339
29d-31a 321n19
29e 175, 322n26, 326, 460
30a 345
30b 209, 218, 312, 313n31
30b6–31b3 50
30c 258, 30c2
31c-53c 433
34b3–6 376
35a1–4 322n25, 376
35a-b 103, 104
36b6-c6 377
37c 452
37a-c 103
37d-e 482
37e1 266
39e 32, 296n10
39e7–9 254, 389, 394
39e-40a 212
38c9-d6 149
39e-40a 483
40a 173
40e 483
41a-b 453
41b 469
41a-42e 313n31
41a-44c4 368
41d 333n63, 378
41e-42d 88
42b 180
42b-d 126, 386
42b-43a 209
43a 210
43a-c 124
47a-b 88
47e-48e 216, 321n19
48c2–6 327n46
48c2-e1 512
48e-52d 313n31, 315
50c-52d 178
51e6–52d1 327
53c 345, 433
53d4–7 327n46
68e-f 218
70d-e 179
73d 179
76d-e 211
77a-b 32
78b4–84b4 322n26
90a-d 112
90b-c 139
90d5–7 112
90c7–8 88

Plotinus
Enn.
II 9 [33], 6.10–16 310
II 4 [112], 4.14–15 331

IV 1 [42], 5–6 295
IV 7 [2], 13.1–8 332
IV 8 [6], 4.35 333
IV 8 [6], 8 522
V 1 [10], 8.23–27 318–319
V 2 [11], 1.8–13 293n2
V 3 [49], 13.25 331n60
V 8 [31], 10.16–22 295n9
V 8 [31], 3.30–36 303n23
V 8 [31], 11.1–8 299n18
VI 2 [43], 7.16–20 330
VI 9 [8], 4.15–16 199
VI 7 [38], 17.13–26 297n15

Plutarch
Amatorius
748 231
758d 231
De Animae Procreatione
1031b 104
1027c 153
1019e 153
1020e-1022a 153
1029c3–8 153
Consolation to his Wife
611a4–5 420–421
Dion
10,1–3 141
De genio Socratis
579c-d 142
De sera numinis vindicta
550d-e 140
De virt. mor.
441b 55

Porphyry
In Cat.
91.19–27 338–339
Marc.
3 424
3 424
3 424
8 424
11 460
16 460
18 460
20 460
21 461
In Rep.
F 187 Smith 348
In Tim.
F 36–37 Sodano 340
F 40 Sodano 342
F 47 Sodano 341
F 51 Sodano 342, 343–344
F 55, 41.19–20 Sodano 342
PH
F 16 Nauck 345
On What is up to us
F 268–271 Smith 348

Proclus
In Alc.
10.6–15 545n46
18.15–19.9 511
201.5–8 547
In Crat.
1, 1.1–4 512
ET
191, 166–7 523
In Euclid
179.14–22 33
179.22–80.22 33
In Parm.,
641.1–5 512
646.16–647.18 506
658.33 64
829.22 388
1033.17 470n2
1054 362
1061.25–1062.9 478
1114.29 470n2
1118.224 470n2
1142.9 470n2
1199.18–25 530
PT
I.4 506, 507
I 1.6.16–17 390–391
III 10, 42.13–18 525
In Tim.,
I 2.1–8 536
I 12.30–13.7 512
I 14.20–21 17
I 14.21–29 64
I 16.6–12 64, 65
I 31.19–32 280

I 204.24–27 350
I.233.1–4 306n25
I 306.10–14 390
I 310.3 470n2
I 374.2 470n2
I 395.10–396.26 344
II 102.6 ff 341
II 105.28 470n2
II 275.23–31 395
II 277.28–278.1 398
III 35.25–27 482
III 103.18–24 390
III 203.32 470n2
III 278.9 470n2

Ps-Plutarch
de fato
568c 439
572f-573a 439

Sextus Empiricus
PH
I 8 60
I 98.16–20 388
I 234 61

Simplcius
In Phys.
151.11–19 576
230.36–231.7 93
In Cat.
70.14–24 575
70.20–24 576
In De An.
1.18–20 372
89.33–90.25 372
In Ench.
3.3–19 572–573

Speusippus
F33 IP 30–31
F25 IP 38–39
F35 IP 33
F39 IP 36
F123–146 IP 38
F154 IP 42
F171 IP 43
SVF
I 85–96 46
II 357–68 46

Synesius
De dono
311A 430
Ep.
5.305–8 430

Syrianus
In Parm.
F2 470n2
F3 478
F4 470n2
F5 470n2
F6 470n2
F7 472
In Tim.
F1 471
F2 472
F 9 470n2
F13 470n2
F18 482
F25 470n2
F60 470n2

Theano
Theano to Rhodope
200 419

Theon
Expositio
69.12–72.2 148
87.4–93.16 148
138.9–147.6 149
188.25–189.6 150

Virgil
Aeneid
6, 750–51 463
6, 746–9 463